

VOL. 90

DECEMBER 1985

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or
all of these the Vision of the Paramatman is Obtained.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 90

DECEMBER 1985

No. 12

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'

ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात्तपसोऽध्यजायत ।
ततो रात्रिरजायत ततः समुद्रो अर्णवः ॥

Rta and *satya*¹ were born of intense² *tapas*;³ from that was born Night,⁴ and thence the vast ocean.⁵

Rg-Veda 10.190.1

समुद्रादणवा दधि संवत्सरो अजायत ।
अहोरात्राणि विदधद् विश्वस्य मिषतो वशी ॥

Afterwards from the vast ocean was produced the year,⁶ ordaining nights and days, controlling every moment.

Rg-Veda 10.190.2

सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ धाता यथापूर्वमकल्पयत् ।
दिवं च पृथिवीं चान्तरिक्षमथो स्वः ॥

As before,⁷ the Ordainer created the sun and moon, the sky, the earth, the atmosphere and the abode of the gods.

Rg-Veda 10.190.3

* Given here is a famous *Rg-Vedic* hymn repeated everyday by the twice-born during the twilight devotions (*samdhya*) for the effacement of sin (*aghamarṣaṇa*). The hymn does not make any direct or indirect reference to sin or its eradication; instead, it only refers to the creation of the universe. The Hindu method of eradication of sin is to expand one's consciousness by connecting the individual soul with the cosmic Reality. It is as an aid in this process, based on *tapas*, that this hymn has acquired sin-effacing power.

1. *rta* means Eternal Law governing cosmic order, and *satya* the attunement of individual conduct to it.

2. According to Sāyaṇa *abhūtat* may mean *abhitaptāt* ('from *tapas* done previously' by Brahma) or *abhitah prakasamanat* ('from the all-illuminating' Supreme Self).

3. *tapas*: cf *Nāsadiya-Sūktam* of *Rg-Veda* 10.129.3.

4. 'Night' may refer to primordial nescience, *Māyā*.

5. 'Ocean' may refer to primordial Space, *ākāśa*.

6. 'Year' stands for Time.

7. As in the previous cycle of creation.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL shows that critical situations in life can be properly dealt with only by transforming our ego-consciousness, and also discusses three types of transformation of consciousness.

As a commemoration of the International Youth Year and as a pointer to the importance of the Youth Convention to be held at Belur Math in the last week of December, this issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* is featuring three articles. The first one INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR 1985—A REVIEW by Br. Bhaswara Chaitanya of Ramakrishna Math, Madras, discusses the chief objectives of the IYY and the way IYY was observed in different countries. Swami Prabhananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, discusses in his thought provoking article THE YOUTH AND

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, the meaning of development, the need to make youth movement development-oriented, and also four basic conditions the fulfilment of which is necessary to make youth movement successful. In YOUTH PROBLEM AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA Sri Nabaniharan Mukhopadhyay, Secretary, Akhilabharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal, stresses the need for a sympathetic understanding of youths and the importance of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda in moulding the lives of modern youths.

In the second instalment of SWAMI SHUDDHANANDA by Swami Muktinathananda of Belur Math you will have some idea of the great love and care with which Swami Vivekananda trained his young disciples.

TRANSFORMATION OF EGO-CONSCIOUSNESS

(EDITORIAL)

Finding equilibrium in life

The French chemist Berthollet (1749-1822) who accompanied Napoleon in his expedition to Egypt noticed sizeable deposits of washing soda (sodium carbonate) on the banks of some Egyptian lakes. They had evidently been produced by the action of saline water on the limestone (calcium carbonate) bordering the lakes. This surprised him because under normal conditions it is the reverse reaction—sodium carbonate and calcium chloride reacting to produce sodium chloride and calcium carbonate—that usually takes place. Berthollet concluded that the heavy concentration of sodium chloride in the lake caused by the excessive evaporation of water had driven the reaction

in the opposite direction. This discovery led to the formulation of an important law of physical chemistry known as the Law of Mass Action. This law states that the direction and rate of a chemical reaction depend in part on the masses of the reacting substances.

A law similar to the Law of Mass Action seems to operate in the mental universe. A person's character is the sum total of the good and bad tendencies (*samskaras*) produced in him by his past experiences, and the nature and direction of his behaviour depend upon the way these good and bad tendencies react with each other. If the good tendencies are greater in number and strength, his actions will be good, moral, spiritual; and even if the evil tendencies in

him get the upper hand once in a while, the good tendencies by their sheer mass will overcome them and put him back on and drive him along the track of virtue. The famous statement in the Gita that 'By the previous practice itself he is carried forward in spite of his limitations',¹ though it refers to effort made in the previous birth, is equally true of everyone's present life also.

The important implication of the above fact is that, human life derives its dynamism primarily from an inner source inherent in its being. In every human being there are, apart from basic biological impulses, the urge for creativity, the urge to know, to love and to seek higher forms of fulfilment. At the same time various external forces, chiefly socio-economic and cultural, are acting upon man. One of the important functions of the ego is to regulate the expression of inner urges in accordance with the external forces and keep the human personality in a state of equilibrium.

The primary struggle in human life—in fact, in all forms of life—is to attain a state of dynamic equilibrium. Life belongs to the category of what scientists call 'steady state' but is not an unregulated uniform flux. It is a state of constantly self-renewing equilibrium. Without the maintenance of a more or less stable internal environment (a principle known as homeostasis) the physiological functions of the body cannot be carried out. In the same way, the mind can function creatively only if there is a stable psychological environment. Consciously or unconsciously every person tries to maintain the constancy of his psychological environment by making necessary adjustments in his relationships, emotions, beliefs, conceptions, attitudes and actions. When one state of equilibrium attained thus through much effort gets disturbed, he makes

fresh adjustments and tries to attain another state of equilibrium.

For instance, a young man has to find a new equilibrium in life when he marries. This equilibrium becomes inadequate when he realizes that the work he had been doing is dissatisfying or that his marriage is a misalliance, or when he has to face critical situations brought about by his own folly or by somebody's maleficence. He then finds that he is unable to function creatively or find peace of mind until he finds a new equilibrium in his life. Failure to find a proper equilibrium in life may lead to various psychological problems like depression, alienation and neurosis.

How can a person find equilibrium in life? At first he may try to find it in the external world—through change of job, through divorce, by trying to manipulate the people around him or by trying to forget his problems through alcoholism, reading of fiction or reckless living. As a matter of fact, the time and energy of many people are mostly spent in seeking external means of attaining equilibrium in life. But sooner or later they find that their efforts are fruitless. For one thing, external factors cannot be manipulated beyond a certain limit. It is of course true that some of our economic and health problems can be solved by external means, but even in such instances it is often found that every problem solved has given rise to two more. Many of the developed countries of the West have succeeded in eradicating dire poverty, gross ignorance and exploitation of man, but these changes have also directly or indirectly intensified the existential sufferings of the people there. Problems such as anxiety, loneliness, moral laxity and meaninglessness are indications of the inability of people to find a suitable equilibrium in life. The external world cannot really solve the basic problems of life; it can only create them,

¹. पूर्वभ्यासेन तेनैव हियते ह्यवशोऽपि सः ।

Need for transformation of consciousness

True equilibrium in life can be attained only by transforming one's ego-consciousness. As mentioned earlier, it is the ego that keeps up the equilibrium between inner urges and outer influences. This it does by developing a certain degree of consciousness. When owing to external or internal causes the equilibrium is upset, the ego can establish a new equilibrium only by transforming its consciousness. Attitudes, faith, relationships and behaviour pattern together constitute ego-consciousness, with 'I' as its core. Transformation of the ego means transformation of this whole constellation of consciousness. When difficult situations arise and we find we are unable to cope with them, we should know that the time has come for us to take stock of our present attitudes, needs, relationships and other aspects of the ego and to bring about a total transformation of our ego-consciousness.

The attainment of a state of equilibrium in life does not mean the elimination of all difficulties, which are bound to crop up as long as life lasts. What it really means is a state of consciousness in which we understand our problems clearly, are able to deal with them effectively, and at the same time succeed in actualizing our creative and spiritual potentialities satisfactorily. This important principle was put in a very simple way by Sri Ramakrishna in one of the precepts that he gave Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi : 'Whatever is appropriate at a particular time, do that at that time ; whatever is appropriate in dealing with a particular person, deal with him in that manner ; whatever is appropriate at a particular place, do that there.'² It is difficult

to think of a better rule of thumb for human conduct than this simple advice, and yet, no grown-up person need be told that, for all its simplicity, it is an extremely difficult principle to be put into practice. Nor was this precept intended merely to teach how to cultivate pleasing manners or how to avoid fauxpas and ineptitude in social life. What was implied in the teaching was the cultivation of a larger awareness, an expanded ego-consciousness, which could take on all situations with equanimity allowing one freedom to maintain unbroken God consciousness under all circumstances.

It is not enough to attain some sort of equilibrium in life and lead a well-adjusted social life. The chief purpose of attaining equilibrium should be to free us from tension, worry, distraction and waste of energy caused by a disharmonious life so that we may turn inward at all times to the real source of knowledge, strength and peace deep within us. Transformation of ego-consciousness is an important and unavoidable aspect of spiritual life. During the early stages of spiritual life a certain degree of purity and transformation of the ego is necessary in order to acquire even a glimpse of inner Light. After that, as the soul progresses in spiritual life, the ego has to undergo corresponding changes. Every movement towards a higher level in spiritual awareness changes a person's outlook on the world, his relationship with people and his understanding of life. Every genuine spiritual experience produces profound changes in the ego.

We have already seen that something like the Law of Mass Action governs the operation of *samskaras*. However, the ego can control the action of *samskaras* to some extent. Moreover, the *samskaras* are an integral part of the ego-system and, when ego-consciousness changes, a wholly new set of *samskaras* gets activated. A person after leading an immoral life for some years

2. *Jakhan jemon takhan temon,
jāhāke jemon tāhāke temon,
jekhāne jemon sekhāne temon,*

may suddenly undergo an inner transformation and, when this happens, he finds new ideas, new urges, new sentiments operating in him. We find this phenomenon in the lives of Girish Chandra Ghosh, Kalipada Ghosh and a few others who became the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The Master awakened their dormant spiritual consciousness which totally transformed their egos. When a person undergoes such a transformation, he may find it difficult to believe that he once lived a low life or may wonder how he could do all those bad things. He may still feel the pull of his old tendencies, but the new *samskaras* fight with the old ones and soon put them out of action.

Some of our difficulties in life may have been caused by other people, and some by our own impulses. But the remedy is not to fight with those people or to sit brooding over our weaknesses. The real problem is the state of consciousness the ego is in. When ego-consciousness is transformed, many of our difficulties automatically get solved or appear solvable. At all events, it is unwise to look upon life as a perpetual fight with the people around us or even with ourselves. Human development should be looked upon simply as a movement from one equilibrium state to another through a series of transformations of consciousness. Many of our failures in life are caused by our failure to make this movement.

Transformation and translation

Before proceeding further it is necessary to point out the distinction between two types of changes that take place within us which the transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber has termed transformation and translation.³ Transformation is that pro-

cess by which we move from one equilibrium state to another, whereas translation is the process by which we make adjustments within one equilibrium state.

True knowledge is based on experience. Every person has a certain amount of knowledge derived from his own actual experiences in life. Based on that he develops his own views and concepts of the world. These constitute his own personal language. Even a little child has his own personal language, and goes to school with his own tiny amount of experience and small number of concepts. When he reads a book or is taught by a teacher, he can assimilate the new knowledge only by interpreting it in terms of his own personal language. This interpretation, which is a more or less subliminal operation, is a kind of translation. Through this inner translation one concept is linked to another, and thus the child develops a chain of concepts. Very often the knowledge thus gained may have nothing to do with the actual experiences of life which he has to acquire through other means in the course of growing up. As a child grows, his ego-consciousness undergoes continual transformation, irrespective of the knowledge gained from books.

In adult life much of the knowledge we gain from books and other people is the result of a personal translation process. The new knowledge acquired in this way may increase our understanding of the world we live in, may enable us to appreciate or express beauty and abstract truths or to improve the economic conditions of living (though much of the knowledge so easily available in modern times is nothing but useless rubbish) but it all means one thing: adjustment to the equilibrium or state of harmony with the world, which we have already attained. If we wish to move from a lower equilibrium state to a higher one, we can do it only by transforming our consciousness—and this cannot be done merely

3. Ken Wilber, *The Atman Project* (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1982) Pp. 40-42

by reading books. After reading some books on spiritual life and gaining some clear ideas about God, Atman, meditation and similar subjects, we sometimes come to the erroneous conclusion that our life has changed much or that we have become holier or more spiritual than other people. If introspection does not dispel this delusion in time, bitter experiences in life will do it soon enough.

The psychological *translation* described above affects only our surface consciousness. It does not alter our basic attitudes, emotional responses and behaviour patterns. These are controlled by forces originating in the unconscious and can be changed only by a psychological *transformation*.

Types of transformation of consciousness

Psychological transformation which radically alters our *whole* life is of three types : transformation within the unconscious, transformation of the unconscious into the conscious, and transformation of the conscious into the superconscious.

In the first type, though a person's outlook on life gets completely changed, the actual transformation is restricted wholly to the unconscious. He has no conscious control over it and may not be even aware of it. The transformation of consciousness that takes place spontaneously when a child grows into boyhood or girlhood and thence into adolescence belongs to this type. To it also belongs the sudden 'conversion' that happens in the lives of some people. A rich landlord of Bengal once overheard the little daughter of a washerman telling her father, 'When will you set fire to the *bāsanā*?' She was referring to the dried sheaths of the banana-tree the ash of which was used in laundering. But the word *vāsanā* also means the latent impressions produced in the mind by past experiences. This meaning struck deep in the heart of the

rich man. He at once renounced the world and went to Vrindaban where he spent the rest of his life in austerities and became famous as saint Lala Baba. The lives of several saints like St. Francis of Assisi, Ignatius Loyola, Tulsi Das, Eknath and others in the East and the West were marked by such sudden conversions. In a less spectacular way such sudden conversions occur in the lives of ordinary people also. One such conversion is enough to free a man for ever from attachment to the world and propel him unceasingly to seek a higher goal in life. The exact psychological mechanism which brings about this kind of spontaneous transformation is not fully known.

This kind of transformation need not necessarily be a sudden occurrence; it may be a slow, long-drawn-out process extending over several years. This gradual transformation is quite common and many people seem to be undergoing a gradual inner change which they are not quite aware of.

In the second type of transformation the contents of the unconscious are changed into the conscious. As in the first, here also the main processes take place in the unconscious itself but the conscious mind has access to them. In most cases the transformation is triggered by a conscious effort of the ego.

The unconscious is like a dark underground chamber or cellar with several walls and labyrinths. It is the store-house of all instinctual drives and seeds of desires. The memories of all past experiences are preserved there. Some of these memories are in a dormant state, while others are very active and powerful but are kept pushed down by a psychological mechanism which Freud called 'repression'. The irrational fear of dogs, of being alone, of being in a closed room and similar difficulties that some grown-up people feel may have caused by the repressed memories of unpleasant

childhood experiences. Constant feeling of insecurity, anxiety, depression or lack of zest for life may also be the result of conflicts between repressed desires. When repression is removed, the person feels greatly relieved and finds it easy to lead a normal well-adjusted life. Freud's main achievement was that he showed how repression could be removed by extending the conscious into the unconscious with the help of a trained psychologist. Psychoanalysis is based on the fundamental principle that some of the contents of the unconscious can be transformed into conscious experiences. It is generally applied only to deal with abnormal mental conditions.

But even in normal healthy living psychoanalysis can be, or should be, carried out by the individual himself without the help of a psychiatrist. Through this kind of self-psychoanalysis he can learn a great deal about his own mental life, desires, capacities, weaknesses and causes of his failures in life, and channel or sublimate the energy of lower impulses into higher aspiration and creative work. It is important to note that psychoanalysis is not mere passive knowing; rather, it is an active participation in the dynamics of the unconscious and progressive transformation of the unconscious into the conscious.

The key factor in this transformation is the integration of the past into the present. Our present attitude, reactions and behaviour patterns have been determined by our past experiences, especially those of childhood and adolescence. Many of these past experiences may have been unpleasant and we would like to forget all about them. But forgetfulness does not solve any real problem in life. Instead of trying to run away from our difficulties, from our lower desires and impulses, we should face them—'Face the brutes' as Swami Vivekananda advised us to do. If the *samskaras* of past experience continue to disturb our present life it

is necessary to dig them out and deactivate them. Delving into dark catacombs of the unconscious and rediscovering one's own past may be a frightening experience for many people, but is vitally necessary.

It may be asked, what good will come out of this unpleasant task? In the first place, it is necessary for the integration of the personality. The present ego is built upon the forgotten egos of the past and, if they are not integrated properly, there will be divisions in the personality. No instinct or impulse can act without the support of some part of the personality. Lower impulses are all parts of discarded lower selves and, when these selves are absorbed into the present ego, those impulses will cease to trouble us. If you do not know your own past selves which constitute the foundation of your present self, if there are large areas in your mind which are beyond your control, how can you trust yourself, how can other people trust you? If one part of your personality acts contrary to other parts, how can you have peace of mind?

Secondly, integration of the past into the present is necessary to make our lives more real and our attitude towards the world more realistic. Knowledge of ourselves will enable us to understand other people better and this will improve our relationship with them. In order to hide its past the ego often puts on various masks which appear as egotism, vanity, conceit, snobbery and arrogance. Very often humility itself is used as a mask by the ego. The integration of the past will make these masks unnecessary.

Integration of the past may involve repentance, *paścāttāpa*. This need not be a morbid act of self-condemnation or brooding over the past. It can be a healthy and positive form of *tapas* or austerity meant to purify one's heart. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Tears of repentance wash off the dirt of evil committed in the past.' Christ

taught repentance as a condition for receiving divine grace. This doctrine later on became an instrument of self-torture only when it was incorporated into priestcraft and the crude Christian theology of Original Sin. If the distinction between the stainless, uncreated, self-luminous, blissful Atman and the shadowy images of the ego is understood, and if the person is sufficiently mature and strong in mind, repentance practised as mental *tapas* for a short period can transform ego-consciousness quickly. Enlightened repentance creates such a strong impression in the mind that it prevents us from committing again the mistakes of the past. True repentance is not brooding over the past but preparing for the future.

If one has had a beautiful, happy childhood and adolescence but now finds the present life miserable, even then the integration of the past into the present is necessary. It will activate once again the springs of power and joy in the unconscious and make them flow into the wilderness of present life. It is said that when as a small boy Siddharta was once sitting under a rose-apple tree, he experienced ineffable calm and peace. Years later when he renounced the world, he remembered that experience and was eager to recapture it, which of course he did under the Bodhi tree.

Whether a person's past was happy or unhappy, integration of the past into the present is not mere recollection, a passive act of thinking about the past. The past experience has to be relived, the past events are to be reenacted in the depths of the mind, with all the original intensity but with the knowledge, detachment and power that he now possesses. Says Mac Intyre: 'It is a great mistake to suppose that what is involved in the awareness of unconscious motives and in the recovery of hitherto suppressed memories of forgotten incidents and phantasies that analysis provides is simply an intellectual apprehension. The

painful emotions and scenes have to be revisited in feeling as well as in thought, and in the whole process there is a strong element of regression. It is because of this that the patient may first have to get worse in order that later on he may get better.'⁴ This is all the more true of self-integration.

The more one's past is rediscovered and accepted, the more the unconscious gets transformed into the conscious. This process becomes easy if one has already experienced what we have described elsewhere as 'ego-awakening'.⁵

We have discussed two types of transformation of consciousness. We now come to the third type: the transformation of the conscious into the superconscious. If the first two types of transformation represent man's struggle to rise from animality to full humanity, the third type represents his struggle to rise from humanity to divinity. Whereas the first two types change only the ego's mode of functioning, the third type changes the very structure of the ego itself. As the conscious gets transformed into the superconscious, the ego itself gets transfigured.

This transformation of the conscious and transfiguration of the ego constitute the primary concern of spiritual life. All spiritual disciplines like prayer, worship, meditation, and even Karma Yoga, are only different techniques for this change. Every time we pray or meditate intensely our consciousness undergoes a transformation, though the change may be so small that we may not notice it. As this transformation progresses, inner darkness changes into inner Light.

How this transformation takes place and what agents bring it about will be the subject of our discussion next month.

4. Alasdair Mac Intyre in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (New York: MacMillan 1967) Vol. 3, p. 250

5. See the July 1985 editorial



Year of the Youth Feature

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR, 1985—A REVIEW

BR. BHASWARA CHAITANYA

'Youth is a wonderful thing. What a pity it is wasted on children!' lamented George Bernard Shaw. Could this 'wastage' be prevented by making these 'children' realize that they have in their possession something really 'wonderful'? This was perhaps the question that the officials at the United Nations (UN)—once youths themselves—were faced with when they adopted in the year 1977 a declaration in principle that the UN would arrange a Youth Year. The proposal had been initially put forward by Romania a couple of years earlier, and the countries of the Third World had heartily welcomed it. On 17 December 1979, the UN announced its final decision to observe 1985 as the International Youth Year (IYY).

The choice of a theme for the IYY was by no means unanimous. The Western Governments wanted 'participation' to be the theme, the Eastern Bloc chose 'peace', and the Third World proposed 'development'.¹

True to its policy of satisfying everyone as far as possible, the UN adopted all the three, leaving the countries free to take, leave or emphasize the elements they wanted. Be that as it may, the 'three-in-one' theme does aptly express the objectives of the IYY. And its three constituent elements, are in fact, wonderfully interrelated.

Participation. This implies that the youth must be given opportunities to participate in forums responsible for taking decisions affecting their lives and the future of their societies. This calls for a sense of mutual trust between the adults and the youth. Discussions with more than 1,200 young people in Australia have revealed that young people see themselves and are perceived by older Australians as part of a 'distinct social group'.² This is more or less the state of affairs in all parts of the world. This distinctness exists because sufficient channels have not been provided to involve youths in the nation-building processes at work.

Development. Once the youth energy is

1. *Times Higher Education Supplement* (UK) of 19.4.1985

2. *Ibid.*

employed for constructive purposes, individual and collective development is inevitable. Just as the youths have a duty to promote their country's progress, so have the adults the responsibility to provide opportunities to the youths to develop themselves and work for the all-round development—social, economic and cultural—of the country. Indeed, a 'stagnant' individual or society is surely heading for a disaster.

Peace. Peace is a primary requirement for both participation and development. Nothing positive can be achieved if peace is lacking. At the individual level, this has to be achieved by inner harmony which is the direct result of spiritual fulfilment. At the national level, a serious rethinking is necessary to find out ways and means of channelling youth energy in constructive directions like participation in national development projects. Most of the violence in the world today is caused by the youths who are motivated by adults to indulge in acts of terrorism. Besides, elimination of discrimination and social injustice are essential prerequisites for peace in any society. At the international level, new ways must be found to limit the arms race and excessive expenditure on arms by governments at the obvious expense of development and social programmes so vitally essential in today's conflict-stricken world. Calculations have shown that illiteracy could be brought to an end by spending a sum of US \$ 160 billion—which is just about a quarter of the world's expenditure in 1982 on armament!³

The IYY Emblem, given above at the beginning of this article, was designed by Lee Kaplan, an arts student from USA. It beautifully expresses the three-fold theme of the IYY. 'Participation is represented by the use of multi-profile motif and Development by progressive shading. Peace, significant prerequisite for development, is

symbolized by the traditional olive wreath of the UN emblem. The emblem, as a whole, expresses the idealism and dynamism of youth, mobile and outward reaching.'⁴

At its 35th session in 1980, the UN General Assembly established an Advisory Committee for the IYY composed of 24 member states, appointed on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.⁵ The objective of the IYY, according to Javier Perez De Cuellar, the UN Secretary General, was 'to focus world-wide attention on the needs of young people in all countries and to give recognition to the vital role which they can play in the creation of a more just and peaceful world.' More specifically, the main objectives of the IYY were to:

(a) heighten awareness of the situation of the youth, and their needs and aspirations among decision-makers and the public;

(b) promote policies and programmes relating to the youth as an integral part of social and economic development, according to each country's experience, conditions and priorities;

(c) enhance the active participation of the youth in society and in particular the promotion and achievement of development and peace;

(d) promote among the youth the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding among peoples;

(e) encourage co-operation at all levels in dealing with youth issues.

The advisory Committee of the IYY then formulated and refined a specific Programme of Measures and Activities for IYY (UN document A/36/215) at three levels:

4. IYY Brochure pub. by UN, Dept. of Public Information (Oct.' 84)

5. The Advisory Committee members are: Algeria, Chile, Costa Rica, Democratic Yemen, Federal Republic of Germany, Guatemala, Guinea, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Lebanon, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, USSR, USA, Venezuela.

3. *Objective: Literacy* (Paris: UNESCO, 1985) p. 11

national, regional and international. The programme, in short, suggested that the situation of the youth be analysed and measures adopted to bring about solutions to such youth problems as unemployment and underemployment, inadequate education, poor health services, crime and drug abuse, and the progressive erosion of cultural and family values.⁶

The UN held in 1983 five regional meetings in preparation for the IYY: at Addis Ababa (for Africa), Bangkok (for Asia and the Pacific), Costinesti, Romania (for Europe), San Jose, Costa Rica (for Latin America) and Baghdad (for Western Asia). Each of these meetings assessed the situation of the youth in the respective region and adopted a regional plan of action which served as a model for national action plans for the IYY and beyond.

What were their findings as regards the present situation of youth in the world? Every one out of five of the world's population falls in the 15-24 year age group, which the UN defines as youth without prejudice to national definitions. But the fact is, we are not quite sure of what we mean by 'youth'. Any definition confining youth to a particular age-group can be quite misleading. 'The work of UNICEF and ILO on child labour, for instance, shows clearly that many "children" in the world are subjected to adult work loads—with the same hours and responsibilities—that often has crippling effects on their health. Similar studies of those above 25 who have not, indeed cannot, find steady, gainful employment indicate that "adult" status may be more elusive than a given birthday.'⁷ The UNICEF therefore defines as 'young' all those considered as such by society. This, in other words, is a social definition which

changes with the times and with the cultural and geographical context. Thus the 'youth' age-group is bound to vary from one nation and culture to another.⁸ Nevertheless, to make a beginning, we have got to have some frame of reference. The 15-24 age group to define youth, one may safely say, is the least disputable choice.

A report prepared in connection with the IYY states that the major problems facing the youth of the world have a universal dimension. In the 1980's these problems concern development, the family, work and culture. The report, called for by the Economic and Social Council of the UN, estimates the world youth population at 922 million in 1984, an increase of 79% over the past 24 years.⁹ It is expected to pass the one billion (a thousand million or 10⁹) mark in 1991. The majority of young people (665 million) live in developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where more significant increases are expected to occur. By A.D. 2000, 83.5% of all youth, or 893 million, will live in developing regions.

A recent study has revealed that the key words in the experience of young people in the present decade are: 'scarcity', 'unemployment', 'underemployment', 'ill employment', 'anxiety', 'defensiveness', 'subsistence', and even 'survival' itself! The UN's Economic and Social Council's report states that IYY has provided an opportunity for integrating policies and programmes pertaining to youth and for strengthening linkages among the national, regional and international levels at which those policies and programmes operate. It has recommended that governments continue efforts to develop integrated youth policies, and has called for a regional and global exchange

6. UN's *DESI Backgrounder*, No. 5, Jan. '85

7. Thomas R. Forstenzer, *A difficult future*, *UNICEF News* (New York, N.Y. 10017) Issue 121/1984/3, p. 3

8. India, for instance, has chosen to designate 15-35 year age-group as youth.

9. *UN Weekly Newsletter* (New Delhi: UN Information Centre) Vol. 36, No. 3, Feb. 15, 1985

of views and experiences that are germane to young people everywhere.¹⁰

The UN, committed to improving the present dismal situation of the youth, chalked out various activities and programmes through the concerned organizations of its system. The Department of Disarmament Affairs decided to intensify its activities for the youth by expanding its disarmament internship programme for youths, by arranging seminars and conferences for youths to participate in the World Disarmament Campaign and by wide circulation among the youths of Disarmament information materials.

The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, a part of the UN Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, played a primary role in co-ordinating the activities of and sharing information between the Governments, UN offices, specialized agencies, and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in preparations for the IYY. The Centre actively promoted and publicized the Year through both formal and informal contacts and channels of communication, from meetings, seminars and conferences to publications, mailings and general correspondence. The monthly newsletter *Channels*, published by the Centre, reported on activities, plans and programmes of the national co-ordinating committees and provided an excellent forum for communication between committees, the Secretariats and Youth organizations world wide.

The Non-governmental Liaison Service of UN has concentrated its attention during the IYY on the Tree project which is a combined effort of the UN and the non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to strengthen the NGO involvement in forest related activities in order to meet the challenges posed by global deforestation. The IYY

being an occasion to encourage youth participation in a variety of activities, improving the environment through an international tree planting campaign was the chief idea behind linking the Tree Project and the youth. By volunteering to plant and to care for trees, young people, it was felt, would be a part of the reforestation efforts currently going on and would learn about the stewardship of their environment.

The United Nations University (UNU) has planned a three-phase activity for the IYY, under the general project title: Perspective on Youth. It comprises the preparation of a comprehensive text on the philosophy of youth, a series of interviews with young people on current themes of vital importance, and the production of video tapes of youth discussing the themes of the IYY (with three sub-themes: labour, learning and leisure).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been particularly active during the past 5 years in the preparation for the IYY. It has already held five regional meetings on youth to elaborate studies on the main trends in youth problems and aspirations. Among the main activities planned by the UNESCO for the IYY are: a World Congress on Youth, International Poster Competition on Youth and Literacy and on the theme of Participation, the First World Week of Physical Fitness and Sports for All, to be launched in 1985. All the UNESCO clubs—there are nearly 2,900 of them in 80 countries—planned meetings to encourage youth participation in development at all levels.¹¹ The World Congress on Youth, organized by the UNESCO, was held at

10. *Ibid.*

11. For more details about the activities of the organizations of the UN system, see *Youth Information Bulletin* (Vienna: Dept. of International Economic & Social Affairs) Vol. 1984—4, No. 53 (October-December). See also the subsequent issues, Volumes 1985—1 & 2.

Barcelona, Spain, from 8-15 July 1985. The Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, who inaugurated the Youth Congress, said: 'Youth of all countries, in your dreams are some of our greatest hopes. Nothing great can be achieved without a vision which goes beyond reality, which makes light of existing obstacles and transcends what is apparently possible.' More than 600 participants and observers, including leaders of youth movements from all regions of the globe, attended the Congress.¹²

Besides these organizations of the UN system, how have the national, regional and international organizations and the NGO's reacted to the IYY? Judging by the available reports, the response appears to have been, to say the least, mixed. In the Eastern Bloc, where the proposal originated, the IYY has been heartily welcomed and given sufficient financial support. Some Third World nations too are taking much initiative in the implementation of its programmes. But in parts of the West, official interest appears to be lacking.

One conspicuous absence in the IYY reports on hand is that of USA. Earlier, the US had made it clear that it was concerned about maintaining zero budget growth and expected that the UN Secretary General would utilize available resources in preparation for the IYY.¹³ When asked what America intended to do to support the IYY, a spokesman for the US Education Department is reported to have said, 'Frankly, I've never heard of it. But we don't have anything in the budget, so I guess, the answer is nothing.'¹⁴

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, pledged her support to the

IYY with a grant of £ 1,10,000 through the UK Department of Education and Science, for financing youth activities during the Year. Her government has invited 250 people from 22 mainland European countries to spend a few weeks in Britain as guests of young people around the country. The Parliament is to be 'taken over' for a day when the country's youth would get an opportunity to air their views and question the members on issues concerning the young. Throughout the Year, UK is having a packed programme of workshops and competitions related to IYY themes, a National Youth Festival, an arts festival, and an art and music competition.

The Federal Government of Australia announced a \$2.3 million programme for the IYY, as well as a special \$1.8 million grant to employ youths under its Community Employment Scheme. The Government and the office of Youth Affairs planned a series of Youth Art Festivals, a National Project for students to submit essays on art, works on peace, and investigations on issues facing disadvantaged youth. A 'Youth Parliament' carrying out reviews of policies on youth and making recommendations to all the houses of Parliament was planned.

As a part of its IYY programme, Bulgaria has announced the holding of a world exhibition of achievements of young inventors in the city of Plovdiv in November of this year. The chief aims of the exhibition are to demonstrate the important part played by the inventions of young people in human progress and to stimulate, through public recognition, the most outstanding inventors.

Not wanting to consider the IYY to be an isolated passing event, the Government of Rwanda (Africa) declared its intention to observe the Year in the context of its ongoing youth activities. In addition, it planned special events including competi-

12. *UN Weekly Newsletter*, Vol. 36, No. 22, July 27, 1985

13. *UN Chronicle* (January 1982) pp. 36-37

14. *Times Higher Education Supplement* (UK) of 19.4.85

tions in the fields of agriculture, artisanry, culture and sports.

Turkish authorities, earnest in the implementation of the IYY objectives, aim to create 'a new kind of young person, interested in study and sport rather than politics and terrorism.' They have organized a large number of conferences and sports events to mark the Year. A special television show aimed at young people has been started. Fees levied on university students are to be used entirely for the provision of sports, recreation and refreshment facilities. Keeping in view the principle of 'healthy mind in a healthy body', special inter-university competitions are being held as part of IYY celebrations. Enforcing a strict code of campus discipline, the authorities have put their foot down—much to the dissatisfaction of many youths—as regards individuality in dress and appearance. Unusually dressed youths are being arrested, and drinking alcohol, leaving litter and gambling etc. by the students have been made punishable. This extreme step has had some counter-effect like producing the feeling in the local youths that 'no one trusts us.'¹⁵

In April 1985, a unique international conference of the world's youth was held in Kingston, Jamaica, to celebrate the IYY. The four-day conference, which was inaugurated by Jamaica's Prime Minister Edward Seaga on April 6, was attended by about 1,100 delegates and observers, about one-third of them women, from 100 nations including India and US.¹⁶

In Romania, from whom the proposal for the IYY first came, a Youth Act is being drafted, incorporating rights and responsibilities for young people. In Canada, the Federal Government has given \$12 million for the 'Young and Alive in 1985' undertaking.

One of the most important events of the IYY was, undeniably, the XII World Festival of Students and Youths, held in Moscow from 27 July to 3 August. Stressing the 'Peace' element of the IYY theme, the Festival, attended by over 20,000 youths from 150 countries, had a theme of its own: 'Peace, friendship, and anti-imperialist solidarity.' The Festival began with a Peace March by half a million youths, which culminated at the Lenin Stadium (venue of the 1980 Olympics) for the opening ceremony. The eight days' packed programme covered all aspects of culture and sports. The Festival had the broadest possible representation of the world's youth.

Vladimir Aksenov, Chairman of USSR Committee of Youth Organizations, pointed out in an interview the extent of the Soviet Youth's activity within the framework of the IYY theme. The most important indicator of the 'participation' of the youth in society is, he said, their representation in the bodies of state authority and administration. As many as 331 out of 1,500 deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet (the highest body of state authority in the Soviet Union) of present convocation are under 30. The USSR youth express their views on the key issues through about 250 youth newspapers and periodicals with an aggregate circulation of over 80 million. As for 'development', the youth have built several dozens of cities, large factories, nuclear power plants and hydro-electric stations in Siberia, the Far North and the Far East of the USSR. The struggle for 'peace', Mr. Aksenov said, is viewed by the USSR youth as their priority task. The raising of money for the Peace Fund and the collection of signatures under the peace champions' appeals figure among the main forms of such struggle. The USSR Committee of Youth Organizations maintains relations with 1,350 national, regional and other youth organizations of 140 countries and helps, to

15. *Ibid.*

16. *SPAN* (New Delhi: United States Information Service, May 1985) p. 17

a greater or lesser extent, intensify the activities of the youth anti-war movement.¹⁷

The 2nd Festival of Youth and students of Central America was held at Costa Rica, San Jose. It was devoted to the IYY and, like the Moscow forum, was held under the motto of the struggle for peace, friendship and anti-imperialist solidarity.¹⁸

India began the IYY with a bang, declaring Swami Vivekananda's birthday (12th January) as the National Youth Day. Inaugurating the IYY on that day at a seminar on 'Youth for Unity and National Integration', organized by the National Youth Forum, New Delhi, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the youthful Prime Minister of India, reminded his young audience that Swami Vivekananda's message was 'still very valid for today's youth, and for the strength, unity and the integrity of the country.' The Union Department of Sports, the nodal authority of youth affairs in India, had set up a working group on the IYY as early as August 1983, which held several meetings and made recommendations. It was decided to treat the three-fold theme of the IYY in an integrated manner. A series of programmes was planned: 'leading up' programmes in 1984, 'actual' programmes in 1985, and 'follow up' programmes in 1986. Among the 'leading up' programmes were National/International Seminars,¹⁹ National Integration Camps, and an International Youth Cultural Festival. The 'actual programmes' comprised seminars, workshops and debates on themes relating to youth, exhibitions at district and national levels, national games, and essay competitions. The 'follow up' programmes

were designed to ensure the continuance of the youth programmes initiated during the IYY.

The two major National Youth Programmes, viz. the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuvak Kendra (NYK), are taking a leading part in promoting and extending the scope and magnitude of their activities during the IYY. The NYK, with about 200 major units operating in the country, is playing a key-role in the implementation of the IYY programmes. By the end of the first half of the IYY, the NYK had already conducted 137 youth leadership camps, work camps, sports meets, folk and village art festivals in as many places, rural and urban. The colleges and universities in the country have been celebrating the IYY through their respective NSS units with zeal and enthusiasm. The activities organized by the NSS units include seminars, cultural shows, symposiums, group discussions, youth rallies, sports meets, relay races,²⁰ tree plantation drives, debates, community development projects etc.

The Ministry of Labour, Government of India, organized competitions in fancy dress, mono-acting, recitation and sports for handicapped youths and arranged cultural programmes by the disabled artistes. The state units of National Cadet Corps (NCC) included in their programmes blood donation, slum clearance, tree plantation, social service camps, and anti-dowry and anti-leprosy drives. The various State Governments organized National Integration Camps,

17. *Youth Review* (New Delhi: Information Dept. of the USSR Embassy) Vol. XX, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (2 January 1985)

18. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, No. 20, (15 May 1985)

19. The first National Seminar was held from 4 to 6 June, 1984, at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, West Bengal.

20. The NSS volunteers of Kalyani University (West Bengal) carried on the National Youth Day a torch lit by Revered Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, the late President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. The torch was carried in a relay race from Belur Math and was handed over to the Vice Chancellor of the University. The programme was also covered by Door Darshan and Akashvani.

youth festivals, seminars, and other allied programmes for the youth.²¹

Besides this, several NGO's have enthusiastically come forward to do their mite for the IYY. The Community Development and Social Welfare Department of the Tata Iron and Steel Company Ltd., for instance, arranged several programmes for youths, one of which was a road relay run by six youths in the age-group of 19-23 years. The race was flagged off on 27 August at 7 a.m. and, covering a total distance of 2,354 kms and crossing four states, the team reached Kanyakumari on 11 September, the date on which Swami Vivekananda delivered his historic speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, an International Organization for Youth established in 1960, arranged in New Delhi a national seminar on 'Role of Youth in National Integration' from 28-30 August. It has also planned an Asian Youth Conference on 'Participation, Development, Peace—preparing Youth for Twenty-first Century' from 9-13 December in New Delhi.

The Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission took a major part in the National Youth Day functions held throughout India. Meetings, processions and various competitions were organized and lakhs of copies of Swami Vivekananda's inspiring literature were distributed free among the youths and students. Another spectacular event organized by it is the All-India Youth Convention to be held at the Belur Math, its headquarters, in the concluding week of the IYY.²² Thousands of youths from all

corners of India have already registered themselves as delegates. Group discussions on national integration, youth leadership, rural reconstruction, problems of illiteracy, casteism and untouchability, and allied topics have been arranged. It is a heartening sight to see the youngsters brimming with enthusiasm and energy as they prepare themselves for the Convention in December. The spontaneous response evoked by this Youth Convention clearly reflects the appeal of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's message to the young minds. As a matter of fact, the study circles and Yuvak Sanghas dedicated to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideals are ever increasing in number as well as in magnitude. The Vivekananda Kendra, a social and cultural organization with its headquarters at Kanyakumari, also arranged many special programmes for the youth to mark the IYY.

Nowadays every year is named after some group. The children had their share in 1979, then came the handicapped and then the women. The youth have had their turn this time. And now preparation are already afoot for the coming International Year of Peace (IYP) next year. 'Following one another as they do in rapid succession, these International "Years",' says *The Courier*, 'have a tendency to become International "Yawns"'. Although they often achieve positive results, which seldom seem to receive the publicity they deserve, when the 365 days are up we tend to consider the chapter closed.'²³ So, as the IYY prepares to 'close down', the inevitable question stares us in the face: What have we achieved? If we expected some miracles to take place in the IYY—revolutionizing overnight the role and participation of youth in world-processes—we expected too much. The truth is that work in the field of youth

²¹. For details of the IYY activities throughout India, read *IYY Youth Bulletin (India)* No. 3, July 1985 (New Delhi: Dept. of Youth Affairs and Sports, Govt. of India)

²². Originally planned for December 1984 on the eve of the IYY, the Convention was rescheduled for 24-30 December, 1985. As such it is now expected to provide an excellent opportunity to assess the impact of the IYY and to chalk out a further plan of action.

²³. *The Courier* (Paris: UNESCO) June 1985, p. 3

is ongoing and long-term. One year is too short a period to bring about revolutionary changes at international levels. What the IYY planned to provide was 'an occasion to celebrate youth' and, more importantly, to give 'an opportunity to recognize the youth and to appreciate the work being done for and with the youth.' That it has been able to do so admirably well is beyond a doubt.

It should, however, be remembered that posters, postage stamps, celebrations and exhibitions will not suffice. They have served their purpose of kindling some life and light in understanding the hopes, fears, needs and aspirations of the youth. But now starts the real and more important work

of doing something substantial about it. Unless the impact of the IYY and the response it has evoked are not kept up with increasing youth activities, promoting 'participation, development and peace' in the years to come, the IYY would be reduced to a mere passing event, claiming some place perhaps in the UN history, and would be of interest only to some research student of a future generation who would turn the pages of history to find out why the problems of youth had remained unchanged and unsolved. This can be avoided only if the IYY activities and programmes, which may have begun on the first day of January 1985, are not terminated on the last day of December 1985.

Year of the Youth Feature

THE YOUTH AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Phenomenon of the Youth

The emergence of the youth as a new phenomenon in India, particularly in the eighties, is pregnant with immense possibilities. Its contours appear sharper when viewed against the UN's designating 1985 as the International Year of the Youth. The theme for the observance of the Year of the Youth has been defined as Participation, Development and Peace. Like all other phenomena, the phenomenon of the youth is something extraordinary and somewhat mysterious, most of all to those elders who deal with the youth. But a phenomenon is always a fact, an object of experience and its foreshadowing import,

particularly in the context of national development, demands careful consideration.

Youth is the flower of life. What a man does during this period often determines the whole future course of his life. Youth is the period when the quest for the meaning of life begins. Imbued with a spirit of idealism, young people revere the time-spirit and dream of great things. They adore freedom—freedom to think, work, wander, speak and dream, freedom from fear, freedom to make the best of themselves in all possible ways. They seek self-expression, get fascinated by novelty, and strive for universalism and progress. They have a natural urge to respect reason, truth, unselfishness, sincerity of purpose,

and other noble qualities. But they easily succumb to peer pressure and group-manners; they confuse desire with reality; they seek immediate goals and satisfaction; they are very often overpowered by a sense of estrangement from reality. Over and above these, aversion to traditional values, gregariousness and rebellion against authority characterize their behaviour. Lacking in maturity and experience, some of them temporarily lose the capacity to think rationally and become puppets of gangs, unions or political parties. Nonetheless, Sri Ramakrishna saw great promise in young men. He used to say, 'Why am I so fond of the boys? They are like unadulterated milk; only a little boiling is needed. The boys are like fresh earthen pots, good vessels in which one can keep milk without any worry.'

Nearly 25 per cent of India's population are between 15 and 25 years of age; more than half of the total population is below 25 years. Apart from the pressure of numbers, social scientists have observed certain characteristics of this segment of the country's population. First, the ideas, attitudes and aspirations of the post-1957 generation of Indians are certainly different from those of their predecessors. Second, there has grown a new awareness which has brought changes affecting even the countryside. So sweeping are some of these changes that hardly any social custom, tradition, institution, belief or value has escaped its influence. And the contribution of the youth to this change is considerable. And third, there has spread among the perceptive youth a growing awareness of the fact that the youth have very little share in the vicious atmosphere of corruption, malpractices, distorted values, etc. that have been created, yet they are their victims. Consequently, the attitude and aspiration, and more than that the quality of the modern youth are going to

have considerable impact on the future of the country, including its development activities. But how do the society's elders look at the youth?

Elders and the phenomenon of the Youth

More often than not, elders entertain an oblique view of the phenomenon of the youth. Worried about the turn of events, the elders vehemently complain that the youth are flouting the accepted code of ethics and are challenging the established order and its values. The arrogance of the youth community manifesting itself in agitation and violence, terrorist activities, clashes with the police, hijacking of buses, destruction of public property, *gheraoing* heads of institutions, staging walkout from the examination hall, etc. has disillusioned the elders about the efficacy of the educational system. The fast spreading evils of drinking and promiscuity and the growing menace of teenagers' addiction to narcotics have dismayed the elders. They see potential danger in the aggressive youths' flirting with 'revolution' and involvement in gangsterism manipulated by vested interests. Moreover, they feel deeply concerned about many youth groups working at cross-purposes with the well-being of the community, going about and growing in a manner most harmful to even themselves.

The youth problem, however, is nothing special to this age. More than 2,300 years ago Plato lamented 'What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the laws. They riot in the streets inflamed with wild notions. Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?' It is, therefore, neither a peculiar development nor a curse of our time. It is almost a natural phenomenon with young men in every age. Nevertheless, some

experts who have studied the youth problem during the last three decades, opine that the present phenomenon of the youth, particularly its manifestation in Assam, Punjab and Gujarat, may prove to be a threat to social equilibrium and point to some unpredictable possibility.

However, it is regrettable that the elders fail to realize that young people are not merely the makers of their future but are also strong and vital elements of the present. Youth should not always be equated with immaturity and irresponsibility. The elders' responsibility, therefore, lies in preparing the youth for adult life as also in ensuring their ongoing involvement and participation in the country's all-round development. As in a relay race, the youth of today will have to be entrusted with the torch of all those values which the nation holds dear such as secularism, socialism, democracy, economic equality, social justice and spiritual brotherhood.

Hostile environment

Surrounded by a complex, frustrating and unkind society, the youth of today find their dreams shattered, their hopes unrealized, their aspiration unfulfilled. They learn that three and a half decades of planned development has placed India on the economic map of the world as the world's eighth most industrialized country and also as the third most advanced country in terms of scientific and technological manpower, but her position is still close at the bottom of the list of nations in terms of per capita food consumption, longevity, health-care and general quality of life. Contrary to the nation's avowed commitment to socialism and social justice, a few people here roll in luxury in five-star hotels while 48.13 per cent of the country's population live below the poverty line. About 53.3 per cent of

males and 75 per cent of females are illiterate. Passivity, obscurantism, irrationalism and other inhibiting attitudes have got entrenched in the collective psyche. The approach of the nation's policy makers to the problems of the country is not holistic and futuristic but ad hoc, unenlightened and often whimsical. The system of education which seems to be muddling on, has left the educated youth in the lurch. It is a pity that, after spending more than a dozen years in educational establishments, most young men find no opening in life for self-actualization. Curiously enough, they find the passive precepts of the elders like *Satyameva Jayate* (truth alone triumphs) far less influential than the dictates of society's hidden message of permissiveness, fatalism, magical beliefs and instant solutions. Naturally, such a dampening environment weakens the moral fibre of the growing youth. Moreover, they find regionalism, communalism and casteism gaining an advantage over egalitarian, democratic and universal outlook. Influenced by the culture of the affluent technologically advanced West, the rates of crime, juvenile delinquency, molestation of women, drug addiction, neurotic and psychic disturbances, and suicide are alarmingly on the increase. Engulfed in such a hostile and unfriendly atmosphere, an increasing number of young men in the country feel utterly discouraged. Perceptive youths feel shocked to discover that there have grown vested interests which stand for the preservation of the status quo of the present socio-economic structure as well as its ramifications. Consequently, the patience of the youth has worn thin.

Development not a rosy dawn for the youth

The eighties have been designated by the United Nations as the 'Development

Decade' and this is quite appropriate for India. No other word has held so much sway over our national policy making and planning as 'development'. Since 'development' by definition is for the future of the country, interest of the youth in development programme is a critical factor. The future of a nation largely depends on the quality of the youth; therefore, the national development strategy should have seriously taken into consideration the all-round development of the youth first.

According to experts, three decades of concerted effort has brought India somewhat close to some developed countries in certain areas of development. But though India's GNP has increased more than eight times since the adoption of planned economy, the educated youth feel dismayed to find that the plans have miserably failed to substantially improve the socio-economic condition of the weaker section of the society. Development strategies have not eliminated the inequalities that exist in society in different forms. Rather, the gulf between the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, and between the urban and the rural has widened, and the condition of the weaker sections has deteriorated. Most of the development inputs have benefited those who already had quite something. The dynamics of our society seems to be such that the technical, financial, organizational as well as intellectual inputs meant for the poor masses gradually get diverted to powerful groups and in the process further marginalize the under-privileged poor sections. As a result, there have developed a few modern sectors like small islands in the vast sea of traditional undeveloped sector of ever-neglected masses. Moreover, while development has produced a narrow, self-centred and cynical elite, it has pauperized the masses. Thus, with regard to equality

and social justice, the performance of Development Plans is far short of the target.

Secondly, though development is primarily meant for the rural masses, including the rural youth, there is no evidence to suggest that the masses and for that matter the youth have been given any importance in development strategy yet. Their participation in development has often been compared with the participation of bullocks in ploughing done by the farmer. Here the farmer stands for the elite whose design and decisions effectively operate behind the development programmes. The elite themselves play the roles of planning, managing, administering and implementing the programmes. And the rural masses, including the youth, have been made to play the role of passive beneficiaries at best, and the deprived or exploited lot at worst. This approach has not only failed to touch the heart of the youth, but also has failed to draw out the vast collective reserves of people's energies. With regard to this unutilized or underutilized energy of people, it may not be out of place to mention here that Rabindranath Tagore placed great faith in the ultimate emergence of the down-trodden masses but they, according to him, were weak at the moment and needed the sound advice and guidance of the elite. On the other hand, Swami Vivekananda regarded the people as the repository of strength. Development agencies, according to him, were to play the role of animators and facilitators and help the rural masses stand on their own feet.

Some experts strongly feel that a poor country like India was not so much in need of capital-intensive technical inputs as an ideology and techniques that could set the strata at the bottom of the social matrix moving. Technology had only to supple-

ment it. And what could be a better ideological fountain than religion in the Indian context? Religion dominates the life, thinking and action of the majority of our people, especially those poor masses who are badly in need of development. Unfortunately, however, the planners have shunned religion on the pretext of secularism. But religion, according to Swami Vivekananda, has served as the most trusted fuel for the engine of national life for centuries and also the most dependable cohesive force which unified the society and its culture and sustained it through the ages. The real tragedy is that, while religion has been rejected, nothing adequate has been substituted to serve as a source of inspiration for the youth of the country.

The concept of youth services as a part of social welfare is of recent origin. Till now planners have paid very little attention to the various problems of the youth, particularly in rural areas. The youth during their period of socialization—transition from adolescence into adulthood—find themselves in an unwelcome world. Education, the main instrument of socialization is open only to a select few. Despite a net work of over 6.5 lakh schools and colleges, and an annual budget of the order of 3,500 crores, it has not been possible yet to achieve the goal of universal education of all children up to the age of 14 years as enshrined in the Directive Principles of the Constitution. For every three children enrolled in primary and middle schools, one other eligible child is left out. Again, the education system has become relentlessly meritocratic. Young people face a draconian selection process on their way to university education; 65 per cent of them are winnowed out in the primary stage, another 15 per cent in the secondary stage and only 5 per cent make their way

to higher education. The planners envisaged manpower development related to employment through vocationalization of secondary education. Very little has been achieved in this direction. As young people grow up and desperately try to get suitable employment, they find their prospects bleak. The role of education in improving the employability as well as earnings is vital, yet we find that the problem of unemployment and under-employment appears to be more acute among the educated. The problem of rapidly increasing unemployment has proved to be the most trying and disconcerting one facing the country. The unemployment problem is most acute among educated persons who are relatively young and belong to the age group 15-29. About three-fourths of the total educated unemployed youths are men, and about 45 per cent of them are in rural areas. The new deal for the self-employment of young men provided in the Sixth Plan has not yet produced any significant improvement.

The problems of the youth have become more complicated ever since they were drawn into active politics. While it is necessary and desirable for students to understand the bases of Indian politics enshrined in our Constitution, to be aware of the dynamics of political change and the roles played by political leaders, it is not desirable that their educational career should be disturbed by their active involvement in party politics. Yet when we look at present-day realities, we find that no other group has been so much affected by the shifting winds of Indian politics as the youth between 15 and 29 years of age.

Briefly speaking, with the challenge of abolishing poverty and large-scale unemployment looming large on the horizon of the nation's economy, but with

the national backyard littered with unfulfilled promises made in the Five Year Plans, the youth today are confronting problems, dilemmas and conflicts as they had experienced never before. Young people feel that the frustrating situation is about to throttle the very sap of their youth. Naturally, the 'angry youth' rebel against it, and some of them violently.

Human capital neglected

In the present Indian planning strategies man is conceptually nothing more than a socio-economic unit. But economics of production and consumption alone without any higher values can certainly make it a dismal science, as hinted at by Prof. Galbraith in his *The Affluent Society*. The simple truth that development is for men and that it is to be achieved by men is often lost sight of. In working out development strategies insufficient attention has been given to the human factor. But to a great humanist like Swami Vivekananda, human capital should be the major input in all development strategies. He believed that man was the creator of his destiny. He wrote in a letter, 'Men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world'. He was a believer in human development, material development only coming in as an adjunct to the development of man. Explaining the rationale of his view, he said in an interview to the *Sunday Times*, London, in 1896, 'The basis of all systems, social or political, rests upon the goodness of man. No nation is great or good because its Parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good.' According to this view, the topmost priority in development should be the improvement of the quality of man, the growth of the goodness inherent in him by imbibing man-making, character-building ideas. Obviously, this demands a

congenial social climate. And to achieve it a higher quality of life and conduct will be expected of the parents, teachers and leaders of the society, from whom the youth can draw inspiration.

Development plan and strategy need rethinking

Now, what is 'development'? In a recent publication of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) 'development' has been defined as 'both a process of economic growth and structural change stimulated by an international programme of resource transfer and technical assistance and an inspirational ideal or myth for mobilising people and resources'. Development here aims at bringing about economic and technological advancement by borrowing knowledge, skill and capital from developed countries so that standard of living in terms of capacity to secure basic needs and comforts of the people of an underdeveloped country can be raised. With similar end in view, India's development has proceeded basing itself on certain postulates. Simply stated, the strategy lies in industrialization with emphasis on heavy industry; control of the 'commanding heights' of the economy by the public sector; agricultural self-sufficiency; integrated rural development for ultimate elimination of poverty; centralized planning within the framework of a mixed economy; and firm control on the operation of foreign concerns. But this approach has made man shorn of higher values of life. Besides, a higher standard of living, beyond a certain point, has been found inimical to true growth and happiness in man. Therefore, comprehensive development should have aimed at total human enrichment, internal as well as external, qualitative as well as quantitative.

The solution lies in learning to enlarge and deepen the concept of development based on the Indian seers' vision of man. According to that vision, man has, in addition to his physical dimension, a mental dimension as well as a spiritual dimension. Therefore the scope of development should be wide enough to cover man in all his dimensions, if the aim of development is the all-round well-being of man. Unless development strategy conceives of development as an integrated process with simultaneous and proportionate emphasis on the physical, mental and spiritual growth of man, the various imbalances in development, some of them mentioned earlier, cannot be corrected. Not only to square up these imbalances but even to squarely achieve the vaunted three objectives of growth, equality and social justice of planning, the entire approach needs to be reoriented so that the vast human resources, and especially youth power, could be suitably directed for national development.

Need to guide the Youth to fulfil the nation's aspirations

It will not be enough if development agencies realize that the youth of the country constitute a vast human resource potential characterized generally by idealism, zeal, active habits and positive attitude towards service to others, but they must also evolve strategies to harness and utilize this untrimmed youth force to turn it into a powerful instrument of social, cultural and economic change. Without being suspicious of the motives of young men, development agencies should share with them the stupendous responsibility of reconstructing the society. Only through a true understanding of the ideas, attitudes and aspirations of the youth will the development agencies be able to induct

the youth and involve them at different levels of development. The youth are to be trusted, and they will be trustworthy in return.

The youth too, must prove their worth; they must rise to face the serious challenge. First, they must make a correct appraisal of social realities. Beset with diverse and complex problems, the situation is already grave. The youth must not attempt any movement which may aggravate the situation, for thereby they are likely to land themselves in serious trouble and suffer more than the elders. They must realize that even if their elders are to a large extent responsible for their present uncomfortable situation, they are certainly not their enemies. Above all, they must learn the art of right thinking. To help them to have a grasp of the situation, the youth need to be sensitized to the reality of life. The elders should aim at sensitizing the younger generation, before their attitudes harden and when their minds are still open to new and innovative approaches.

Potential animators, the leaders among the youth, are to be drafted and trained so that they can effectively play the role as agents of development. But such development cannot be initiated by the power of the muscle or the gun-barrel. It can be achieved only by the strength of character. It is character alone which can break through the adamant walls of obstacles perpetuated by vested interests. These leaders can acquire from the West the virtues of vitality, capacity for work, the spirit of equality and respect for every human being but they must remain true to the Indian genius and the inheritance of age-old spiritual values. Over and above this, such young men, to bring about the result intended will have to get themselves organized.

Again, if they are to play their role as

agents of change, it would not be enough if the youth organize youth-clubs, yuva-mandals, etc., and pursue a welfare approach as they very often do. Youth institutions should have to be development-oriented rather than welfare-oriented. And development demands inculcation of self-reliance among the workers as well as among the beneficiaries. Necessarily, strategies have to be developed so that social service may lead to social actions culminating in favourable changes.

Youth participation in development work, when applied to social relations, implies that the latter should be so reshaped as to give an effective voice to the majority of the youth in their groups first, in village-affairs next and through the village at all other levels of the nation's power-structure.

Socialization from childhood into adulthood, inclusive of character development, gainful employment, suitable development of their spirit and opportunities for community service, etc. as well as organizing the youth, needs an integrated strategy or youth programme. To direct the vast youth energy towards the main-stream of national development the four major aspects of the youth power—namely, development, mobilization, organization and utilization—need careful planning. And for this the elders as well as the youth should ponder and finally spell out a National Youth Policy which, among other things, will help channel the youths' energies, idealism, and healthy aspirations towards the nation's development tasks, projects and programmes. Without such definite guide-lines and building up of necessary infrastructure for the same, the large number of youth institutions figuring in the papers of planners will hardly be able to contribute anything towards achieving the comprehensive targets of development.

Nevertheless, as a precondition of the

youth's active participation in the nation's development work, the youth will have to find out for themselves what India really is today, what she was in the past and what she should be in the future. They have to assiduously study the bright points as well as the weak points of her people not through the eyes of Western scholars, but in the light of Indians of genius like Swami Vivekananda. No less a person than Rabindranath Tagore had advised the French Nobel laureate Romain Rolland, 'If you want to know India, study Vivekananda'. For this the youth will have to be widely exposed to Swami Vivekananda's message and teachings. But simply acquiring this knowledge will not do. Grounded on the basic orientation, the youth must have clear ideas about the country's development plans, programmes and strategies. That too will not be enough. They must have the strong will and firm ability to realize those ideas. These few essential points should be taken care of while framing the National Youth Policy.

The stupendous task of unleashing and harnessing the youth power for the nation's development can be made easily attainable through a movement. Now the essence of the alchemy of a youth movement lies in the simultaneous operation of four conditions: (a) a youth movement has to have a rallying point or a driving ideology; (b) it needs a charismatic and dynamic leader; (c) it needs a programme relevant to the felt needs of the youth; but the programme must have spontaneous appeal to the imagination of the youth; and (d) it must have a network of units linked together in a pyramidal form resting on its broad popular base and activated through cadres of trained and committed persons. Here the driving ideology will be rebuilding a glorious India and propagation of her lofty ideals; the leader will be a

national hero like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi or Netaji Subhas Chandra; and nothing else can have more appeal to the youth than the programme for alleviating the wretched conditions of the poor millions of brethren. But such a movement cannot be achieved through agitation or 'social action' alone. Sustained, intelligent and honest efforts by dedicated youths are essential. Again, the challenge of organizing and directing such a movement can be creatively met only if the youth develop their physical, mental and spiritual potential.

Aided by a gigantic youth movement, a sound National Youth Policy, which ought to be framed and announced in the International Year of the Youth, can solve

most of the baffling problems of the country's youth. Simultaneously, the vast youth power is to be harnessed and canalized into development work and moulding the future destiny of the nation. Only such a creative nation-building can redeem the country's youth from their present predicament. For this, to begin with, a band of self-sacrificing youths fired with the zeal of service and fortified with the strength of character need to be motivated and mobilized. They in their turn will take the lead for organizing a vast movement for the realization of the targets of all-round development, leading to the rejuvenation of the Indian Society. Comprehensive all-round development of all sections of the people is the criterion of genuine progress of a nation.

Year of the Youth Feature

YOUTH PROBLEM AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

NABANIHARAN MUKHOPADHYAY

The United Nations has marked the year 1985 as the International Year of the Youth. The object is to focus the attention of all nations of the world on the most vibrant and powerful section of mankind. Previous years were dedicated to women, the disabled, education etc. Actually the International Women's Year turned into an International Women's Decade which comes to a close this year after the International Women's Conference held recently at Nairobi. Every year member nations of the UN study carefully all the aspects of the issue chosen for that year in the context of the general well-being of

humanity. Special programmes are chalked out and funds are liberally allocated to implement them. In the absence of sustained effort, interest in a theme often wanes after the year for which it is chosen is over. Nevertheless, if a single year's attention and sympathy awaken in the particular group of people, whom all are eager to serve during the year, proper understanding of their real needs, aspiration, hopes and possibilities, and if the group has a vision of their future, the goal to be reached, they can sustain their own efforts to achieve them. This is not only possible, but very much needed, particularly in the

case of the youth. In youth lies all the power to remake the world, to make it more livable, specially when life everywhere today seems to be beyond hope.

We know great minds everywhere in the past paid attention to the youth, their proper education, etc. as a sort of worthy investment for posterity. But with scientific and technological development and concomitant ideological changes of the last two or three centuries, social life gradually became so complex and the minds of people became so engrossed in tackling the day-to-day problems that less and less attention was paid to future generations. As a result, almost everywhere the most valuable wealth of a nation, the youth, have become a problem. This is indeed most unfortunate. Seldom does it occur to anybody that at the back of this so-called youth problem, is 'the adult problem' caused by the adults' poverty of thought. All over the world man's understanding of life, unable to keep pace with the vaunted progress of civilization, has degenerated and the goal of human life is being slowly replaced with ideas of more enjoyment and pleasure, mistaking them for happiness. Grown-ups have become more and more interested in themselves without any real concern for the younger generation. Youngsters, on their side, have neither any higher ideal placed before them nor living exemplars to model their lives. Owing to their immaturity and lack of experience modern youths tend to gather more knowledge about the biological aspects of human life than about its moral and spiritual aspects. With the world becoming smaller day by day, this has become almost a universal phenomenon.

In this context, it is indeed heartening that the Government of India thought it wise to begin the celebration of the International Youth Year on 12 January 1985, the day on which Swami Vivekananda

was born, and to declare that that sacred day would henceforth be observed as the National Youth Day in India. The circular issued in this connection by the Government mentioned that 'the philosophy of Swamiji and the ideals for which he lived and worked would be a great source of inspiration for the Indian youth.' It is indeed true that Swamiji's life and ideals can really inspire the youth everywhere irrespective of caste, creed, or nationality. But we have to take care that the bread of life is not lost among the stones and thorns of idolatry and ritualism. As Shakespeare said,

'T is mad idolatry
To make the service greater than god.

We have been organizing for the youth fairs, seminars, rallies, cultural programmes and meetings at which learned speakers preachify, moralize and offer hollow sympathies and assurances to the youth. The youth, on the other hand—not happy in their situation, not knowing wherefrom any help could come, not knowing how to surmount the stumbling blocks on their life's path, not knowing how to boost faith in their own capacity, self-confidence, patience, and perseverance—enjoy the excitement of these celebrations and forget for the time being their pangs, only to find themselves again staring at emptiness.

How vastly different would be the situation if Swami Vivekananda were alive now and if modern youths were to contact his living presence! What a tremendous infusion of power and faith they would receive! Their whole life would get metamorphosed into something divine and spiritual. They would no longer pray and wait for any succour to come to them, but would thrust themselves forward and build a new world for them and for others by restructuring their own thought pattern, vision of the goal and philosophy of life.

Swami Vivekananda embodied in himself the highest possibilities of the youth. As Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar said,

As one dying at the age of forty and accomplishing so much for his fatherland and the world, Vivekananda was certainly an Avatar of youth-force. One may adore him as a man of action, as a man of self-sacrifice, as a man of devotion, as a man of learning, as a man of yoga. He was a hundred per cent idealist, a thoroughgoing mystic, and yet he was a foremost realist and a stern objectivist.¹

The majority of the present-day youth have a feeling that they are neglected. They do not get the type of education that they need, and whatever education they receive does not enable them to earn a decent living by honest means and stand on their own legs. Society does not seem to have any respect for the youth, and their opinion is not normally sought or weighed for its value either at home, or in educational institutions, or in society. It is the youth who are more adversely affected by overcrowding, lack of health care, and lack of facilities for physical and mental exercises and creative undertakings, necessary for the unfolding of their potentialities. They do not feel that they are loved well and taken care of sufficiently either by parents and teachers or by those who run governments. Nowhere do they get real sympathy in the form of positive help. They have no real friends among elders who have had better opportunities for education, experience, enjoyments in life. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of modern youth is that they allow themselves to be easily exploited by selfish politicians, political parties and union activists.

In this dismal situation, Swami Vivekananda can open up new vistas of hope

and promise for the youth if they are introduced to his life and teachings. Swamiji had great faith in the youth and paid much attention to their development at a time when few of his contemporaries thought in that line. Listen to what he said:

I want young men... This is the time to decide your future while you possess the energy of youth, not when you are worn out and jaded, but in the freshness and vigour of youth. Work—this is the time; for the freshest, the untouched, and unsmelled flowers alone are to be laid at the feet of the Lord, and such He receives. Rouse yourselves, therefore, for life is short. There are greater works to be done than aspiring to become lawyers and picking quarrels and such things. A far greater work is this sacrifice of yourselves for the benefit of your race, for the welfare of humanity. What is in this life?²

But appreciation or no appreciation, I am born to organize these young men; nay, hundreds more in every city are ready to join me, and I want to send them rolling like irresistible waves over India, bringing comfort, morality, religion, education to the doors of the meanest and the most downtrodden. *And this I will do or die...* This idea of wonderful liberality joined with eternal energy and progress must spread over India. It must electrify the whole nation and must enter the very pores of society in spite of the horrible ignorance, spite, caste-feeling, old boobyism, and jealousy which are the heritage of this nation of slaves.³

Nowadays people speak condescendingly of the 'youth problem', but it should be borne in mind that this problem had always existed. Two thousand years ago some great minds, even Socrates and Aristotle, spoke ill of the youth of their times and chastised them. But not a word of condemnation for the youth ever slipped from the lips of Vivekananda. He adored and always encouraged the

1. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Might of Man in the Social Philosophy of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1936) Pp. 13-14

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol. 3, p. 304

3. *Complete Works*, Vol. 8 Pp. 298,300

youth, as his own Master, Sri Ramakrishna had done. He advised the youth not to look back to see what they had done or to repent, but to look forward and bloom forth. For him, 'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down'.

When we speak of the youth problem we should make a distinction between the chronic problems of youth and problems peculiar to modern times. The latter problems have been created by socio-economic forces far beyond the control of modern youths. The tremendous expansion of science and technology, industrialization and urbanization and the information explosion have not only created a confusion of values but also deprived the youth of a calm and peaceful environment which is so essential for the life-bud to bloom. Then there are the problems which are characteristic of youth as a transitional period in life. These problems are timeless in the sense that they existed in the past as they do in the present. Their causes are internal and are bound up with the growing process. The youth have to grapple with some of the basic life urges, impulses and feelings which they often find compelling and threatening. Regarding this, Swamiji's message is clear: matter for Spirit, never vice versa. Man is not bound to follow nature but to assert the freedom of the Spirit. In finding a solution to the internal and inherent problem of youthfulness nobody can help the youth more than Swami Vivekananda.

To be young is certainly not a blunder. The glory of human life can find its best expression in youth, provided the youth know how to bring it forth in all its splendour. The power that is in youth is so tremendous that the youth cannot handle it properly unless they acquire the requisite knowledge and discipline. Most young men of the present day do not get the

opportunities for the cultivation of either. Every young person must learn how to harness and sublimate the biological and psychological forces welling up in him. In this task the youth will find a mine of information and inspiration in the works of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji called some of these disciplines 'yoga'. But never mind the labels. What is important is the acquisition of a technique of self-mastery. Without self-discipline young people can have very little hope of making the best use of their youthful energy to build a bright future for themselves and for others or to taste the real joy and fullness of human life. One of the greatest teachings of Swami Vivekananda is that man can find all the strength and succour that he needs in himself, in his own true Self, the Atman. But to get down to this inner spring of power one primary condition is to be fulfilled: *śraddha* or faith in oneself. Swami Vivekananda was very emphatic on this point. He said:

If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods and in all the gods which foreigners have now and again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith...⁴

Therefore, this *śraddha* is what I want, and what all of us here want, this faith in ourselves, and before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that lack of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have this *śraddha*, and everything else is bound to follow.⁵

If the youth of this country acquire this seriousness coupled with faith in themselves, they will not fritter away their energies in frivolities or violence but will equip themselves with courage and moral qualities

4. *Complete Works*. Vol. 3 p. 190

5. *Complete Works*. Vol. 3 p. 320

and give their best to their country. The pall of ignorance and abject poverty that covers about half the population of India can be torn asunder only with the power of youth. Many of Swami Vivekananda's exhortations were therefore addressed to the youth.

It is strange that such a state of affairs does not disturb our sleep and rouse us to our immediate duties.⁶

Get up, and put your shoulders to the wheel—how long is this life for? As you have come into this world, leave some mark behind.⁷

Throw aside your meditation, throw away your salvation and such things! Put your whole heart and soul in the work to which I

have consecrated myself.⁸

Your duty at present is to go from one part of the country to another, from village to village, and make the people understand that mere sitting idly won't do any more. Make them understand their real condition and say, 'O ye brothers, arise! Awake! How much longer would you remain asleep!'⁹

The dawn has already appeared in the eastern sky, and there is little delay in the sun's rising. You all set your shoulders to the wheel!¹⁰

This is an open invitation of Swami Vivekananda to all the young people of this country and if they respond, they will become the builders of the future India.

6. *Complete Works*. Vol. 5 p. 421

7. *Complete Works*. Vol. 5 p. 383

8. *Complete Works*. Vol. 5 p. 383

9. *Complete Works*. Vol. 5 p. 381

10. *Complete Works*. Vol. 5 p. 381

SWAMI SHUDDHANANDA

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Swami Vivekananda formally admitted Sudhir into the Ramakrishna Order giving him the name 'Brahmachāri Shuddhānanda' and later, in May 1897, blessed him through initiation. Sri Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, who became a favourite lay disciple of Swamiji, too was initiated on the same day in the shrine of the Alambazar monastery. Sudhir's own description of this initiation ceremony runs in part as follows:

One day around 9 or 10 a.m. I was doing some work in a room. All on a sudden Tulsi Maharaj (Swami Nirmalananda) came and asked, 'Would you like to receive initiation from Swamiji?' I replied instantly, 'Yes sir.' So far I had not received any Mantra from our family-preceptor or anyone else. However, I had learnt breathing exercises (*pranayama*) and several other Yoga lessons from a yogi and, after practising them

for about 3 years had obtained some improvement in health as well as some stability of mind.... Anyway, though I had been listening to Swamiji's counsel so long, I did not yet receive any direct spiritual help from him, nor did I try to get it. The reason was that I did not dare ask. Perhaps there was also a feeling in my mind that as I had been accepted by him, I would get whatever was necessary for me. Now at the unsolicited call of Swami Nirmalananda, all hesitation left my mind, and I immediately proceeded towards the shrine along with him. I was unaware that Sri Sharat Chandra Chakravarty was being initiated on the same day. As far as I remember, I had to wait outside the shrine for a while because his initiation had not been over. As soon as Sharat Babu came out, Tulsi Maharaj took me into Swamiji's presence and said, 'He wants to be initiated.' Swamiji asked me to sit. His very first question was, 'Do you like God with form or without?'

I answered, 'Sometimes I like God with form and at other times I prefer God without form.'

'That is not correct,' he said in reply. 'The Guru knows the right path for the disciple; let me see your arm.' Then holding my right hand, he started meditating for some time. Thereafter, leaving my hand, he asked, 'Have you ever performed worship by installing a pitcher (*ghata*)?' I replied that a few days prior to renouncing home I had installed a *ghata* and performed a certain worship for a long time. Then he uttered the Mantra of a deity and, after making me understand its meaning thoroughly well, he added, 'This Mantra will suit you. Apart from this, you will gain benefit if you perform worship after installing *ghata*.' Thereafter he foretold one event of my future life and, pointing to a few litchies in front, asked me to offer them as my *guru-dakṣiṇā* (offering made to one's preceptor)....

A little while after our initiation ceremony, Swamiji took his meal. Both myself and Sharat Babu partook of the food left over by Swamiji.²²

Shuddhananda has also described how Swamiji taught his disciples the techniques of meditation:

One day Swamiji assembled us all in the shrine and started teaching how to practise meditation etc. He said, 'First all of you sit in a posture. Think—let my seat be firm, let this seat be motionless and steady, with the help of this will I cross the ocean of this world.' All of us sat and thought as instructed for a few minutes after which he continued, 'Think: my body is healthy and bereft of any disease; it is as strong as the thunderbolt; with the help of this body I shall transcend this mortal life.' After we contemplated like this for a while, he instructed us, 'Think this way: from me a current of love is flowing towards all directions, North, South, East and West; in my heart there is a feeling of goodwill for the entire world; let all attain prosperity, let all be healthy and free from ailments. Thinking thus, perform Pranayama for a short while—not for long—only three Pranayama will do. Thereafter everyone of you should meditate in the core of your heart the image of your own Chosen Ideal (*Ista*) and repeat your Mantra (Japa). Do this for about

half an hour.' All of us tried to follow Swamiji's instructions.

Such group meditations used to be performed in the Math. For a long period Swami Turiyananda was in charge of these meditation sessions. At the behest of Swamiji, he would assemble new monks and Brahmacharins and instruct as well as demonstrate before them different methods of meditation one after another.²³

Swami Vivekananda was extremely alert about shaping the lives of his young disciples so that they might become fit instruments to carry out his lofty mission. He kept a watchful eye on their personal lives, individual habits and tendencies, and admonished them whenever he noticed any defect or lapse. This will be clear from the following incident recorded by Shuddhananda in his reminiscences:

In those days the English daily *Indian Mirror*, edited by Narendra Nath Sen, used to be given to the Math free of charge. However, the monks of the Math did not have enough means to defray the postal expenses and receive the paper by mail. The paper used to be distributed by a newspaper boy up to Baranagore. There was a 'Widows' Home' at Baranagore, established by Sashi Pada Bandyopadhyaya, the founder of 'Devalaya', and a copy of the newspaper used to come to this Home too. As it was the last delivery point of the peon of the *Indian Mirror*, the paper for the Math used to be delivered to the Widows' Home from where it had to be brought to the Math every day. Swamiji had great sympathy for the Widows' Home. In order to help this Ashrama Swamiji delivered a benefit lecture during his stay in the United States and donated the money collected to the Ashrama. In those days Kanai Maharaj, alias Swami Nirbhayananda, had been entrusted with the work of bringing the *Indian Mirror* everyday. Although several newly initiated Sannyasins and Brahmacharins like me were there in the Math at that time, all the routine activities of the Math had not been departmentalized and allotted to all the inmates. As a result, Swami Nirbhayananda had a lot of work to do. So he told me one day: 'I shall

22. *Swāmiṇī Kathā* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 1368 B.S.) pp. 79-82

23. *Ibid*, pp. 78-79

show you the place where the *Indian Mirror* arrives; please bring the paper from there every day.' I readily agreed since the work was very simple and I thought that it would slightly reduce the burden of another. One afternoon a little while after lunch Nirbhayananda told me, 'Let me go, I shall show you the Ashrama of Widows.' As I was about to follow him, Swamiji noticed us and said, 'Come, let's study the Vedanta scriptures.' When I told him that I was going out for the said work, he didn't say anything more. I went out with Kanai Maharaj and returned after identifying the place. On my return I heard from one of our Brahmacharins that a little while after I had left, Swamiji had enquired, 'Where did the chap go? Has he gone to see the ladies?' As soon as I heard this, I told Kanai Maharaj, 'Brother, though I have seen the place, it won't be possible for me to go there again to bring the newspaper.'

Swamiji was so careful about maintenance of pure character in his disciples, in particular the novices. He expressed his disapproval if any monk or Brahmacharin of the Math stayed in Calcutta, except on urgent business, or spent the night there especially where they would have to meet ladies. I have noticed hundreds of such instances.

On the day Swamiji left the Math for Calcutta on his way to Almora, he stood on the verandah beside the staircase and, addressing the new Brahmacharins very earnestly, said a few words regarding continence which are still ringing in my ears: 'Look, my boys, nothing can be achieved without chastity. If one wants to attain spirituality, continence is the only means. Never come in contact with women. Of course, I am not telling you to despise women; they are living embodiments of the Divine Mother. Nevertheless, I am advising you to be away from them in order to save yourselves. Perhaps you have noticed that in my lectures I have often told that spirituality could be attained even in a householder's life. Thereby don't conclude that in my opinion Brahmacharya or Sannyasa is not essential in spiritual life. What could I do? The audience in those lectures consisted of householders, all lay people. Had I told them about complete celibacy, none would have attended my lectures from the next day. Therefore I supported their faith to some extent and lectured in such a manner that they might gradually feel inclined towards total celibacy. But let me open my heart before you: not even the least of

spirituality can be attained without continence. Do you therefore maintain purity in thought, word and deed.'²⁴

Swami Vivekananda reached Almora in the second week of May 1897 and, after a stay of about twelve weeks there, went on a tour to Punjab, Kashmir and Rajputana, lecturing and meeting people. Towards the end of October 1897 he asked Shuddhananda to meet him at Lahore, and from that time Shuddhananda had the rare privilege of travelling with his Guru for two months. After Swamiji left for Calcutta, Shuddhananda continued to stay in the north. He had the good fortune to practise austerities at Almora in the holy company of Swami Niranjanananda. They both stayed at the house of Lala Badri Shaw from July till September in 1898. Swami Swarupananda, another illustrious disciple of Swamiji, was then staying in Almora in connection with the publication of the journal *Prabuddha Bharata*. It is written in his personal diary that on the 16th of September, 1898, Shuddhananda performed *viraja homa* (fire ritual of renunciation) in front of a portrait of Sri Ramakrishna and received Sannyasa initiation from Swami Niranjanananda, thereby becoming Swami Shuddhananda. Probably in the month of September, 1898, they came down to Varanasi.²⁵

Inspired by the presence of Niranjanananda, Shuddhananda plunged into contemplative life at the garden of Bamsi Dutta at Varanasi. They lived in a dilapidated two-storeyed house in that garden. But owing to severe austerities Shuddhananda's health broke down in a short time. He started vomiting bile and, in addition,

²⁴. Ibid, pp. 82-84

²⁵. Swami Abjajananda, *Swāmijīr Padaprānte* (Bengali) (Belur Math: Ramakrishna Mission Saradapith, 1972) p. 22

suffered from intermittent fever. Niranjanananda tried to cure him with the help of a homoeopath. Soon Niranjanananda himself fell ill. Pramadadas Mitra (a well-known scholar and friend of Swami Vivekananda) gave one rupee to provide proper diet for Niranjanananda. In that hour of need the value of this one rupee was indeed very great. Meanwhile, Shuddhananda had become familiar with Charu Chandra Das (later Swami Shubhananda) and Kedar Nath Moulik (later Swami Achalananda) who later on became the disciples of Swami Vivekananda. Coming to know of Shuddhananda's ill health, Charu Chandra arranged for his proper diet at his own expense. Swami Niranjanananda too felt better. At this time Swami Saradananda who had returned from the United States visited Varanasi. Finding Shuddhananda suffering so much, he tried to persuade Shuddhananda to return to Math along with him, but the latter declined to discontinue his austere life. In those days Shuddhananda's meditation would be so deep that he would remain absorbed for hours together oblivious of the painful pricks of innumerable mosquitos. On seeing his whole face and body full of rashes caused by mosquito bite, Saradanandaji bought him a mosquito net for Rs. 3/- and forced him to use it.

While at Varanasi Shuddhananda met Swami Bhaskarananda, a reputed monk of the holy city. On knowing that Shuddhananda was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, Bhaskarananda treated him with extreme tenderness and expressed his eagerness to meet Swamiji once more. Unfortunately, the meeting did not take place. However, when Shuddhananda returned to Math and reported to Swami Vivekananda about Bhaskarananda's eagerness to meet him, Swamiji sent him a humble letter written in Sanskrit.

Shuddhananda's health, however, showed no sign of improvement and he was down with recurring fever. Finally, he had to come down to Math which was at that time in the rented house of Nilambar Mukherjee at Belur. Niranjanananda wrote to Mrs. Sevier and arranged for Shuddhananda's travel expenses as well as a pair of shoes. Niranjanananda himself, however, continued to stay in Varanasi.

Shuddhananda was deeply influenced by the exemplary lives of Swami Niranjanananda, Swami Ramakrishnananda and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The closeness of their relation is illustrated by the following incident narrated in a letter of Shuddhananda:

After remission of my fever, I used to feel extremely hungry; I would demand eight pieces of *roti* (unleavened bread). Niranjan Maharaj would say, 'You are not well, you won't get more than four pieces'. I used to argue that I was habituated to taking at least eight pieces, and so on. One day while I was importuning him thus, he said, 'Right now I shall write a letter to Shashi (Swami Ramakrishnananda) in Madras. I shall write about you and mention that you are badgering me for eight pieces of bread.'

It was as if an affectionate mother was cajoling a petulant child! The incident reveals how strongly they were all tied together by the cord of mutual love and reverence.²⁶

Swamiji's long-cherished desire to have a Bengali periodical as the organ of the Ramakrishna Order was fulfilled when Swami Trigunatitananda started the fortnightly magazine *Udbodhan* the first issue of which came out on the 14th of January, 1899. At the behest of Swamiji, Shuddhananda started assisting Swami Trigunatitananda and soon became one of the chief contributors of the magazine.

²⁶. Ibid, p. 23-26

Around this time Shuddhananda's Bengali rendering of Swamiji's *Raja Yoga* was published serially. A glimpse of Shuddhananda's memorable role in establishing the *Udbodhan* may be obtained from the following reminiscence of a close associate of the Math:

Swami Shuddhananda was as if the right hand of Revered Swami Trigunatitanandaji... Those who saw Shuddhanandaji in those days can never forget how he used to work hard. There is not an iota of doubt that the conversion of *Udbodhan* from a fortnightly periodical into a monthly journal was solely due to his patient, untiring labour, indomitable perseverance and whole-hearted dedication. He used to assist Swami Trigunatitanandaji in all departments of publication—writing articles, selecting articles, proof-reading, supervising the work of the press as well as canvassing subscriptions for the magazine.²⁷

In those days several non-monastic students used to stay at Belur Math following the ancient Indian tradition of *guru-kula*. Shuddhananda was in charge of training these students. The official history of the Math states:

And we have it from the Belur Math Diary that on March 11, 1900, there were six boys there under the care of Swami Shuddhananda. These boys from the families of devotees were admitted in accordance with a clause of the Belur Math Rules framed by Swamiji....²⁸

Perhaps this students' home was the first

27. Kumud Bandhu Sen, 'Swami Shuddhanandaji', *Udbodhan*, Agrahayan 1345, B.S. p. 610

28. Swami Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math & Mission* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), p. 168

of its kind in the history of Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

One day Swami Vivekananda asked Swami Shuddhananda to fetch the *Śukla Yajur Veda* from the Library. When the latter brought it, Swamiji asked him to read therefrom the Mantra beginning with the words *suṣumnaḥ suryārasmih* with the commentary on it. The disciple read the verse together with the commentary. When he had finished a part of it, Swamiji remarked:

This interpretation of the passage does not appeal to my mind. Whatever may be the commentator's interpretation of the word *suṣumna*, the seed or the basis of what the Tantras, in the later ages, speak of as the *suṣumna* nerve channel in the body, is contained here, in this Vedic Mantra. You, my disciples, should try to discover the true import of these Slokas and make original reflections and commentaries on the Shastras.²⁹

Thus we find that Shuddhananda had the blessed opportunity to be very close to his Guru and receive valuable instructions from him. But these happy days came to an end when Swami Vivekananda entered Mahāsamādhi on the 4th July, 1902. Needless to mention, the sudden passing away of his Master came as a bolt from the blue. Who can fathom the extent of his grief at the demise of his beloved Guru.

(To be concluded)

29. His Eastern and Western disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1933), 2nd edition, Vol. II. pp. 907-8

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE STORY OF MIRA'S LOVE BY SWAMI BUDHANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission, Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, New Delhi 110 055. 1983. Pages xii + 52, Price Rs. 5.

Mira's songs stand supreme in the Bhakti literature of India. However, the younger

generation hardly gets an opportunity to cultivate the feeling of divine love. The present book is an attempt to acquaint the young readers with the life of this lover par excellence. The book is based on lectures delivered by the author in New York and Hollywood.

The author gives here the psychological basis of the sentiment of love and supports his statements with the sayings of the Sufi mystic Jalalud-Din Rumi and the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, and also with extracts from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, *Nārada-Bhakti-Sūtra* etc. The story of Mira's life is narrated in a lucid way with excerpts from her devotional songs translated in English. The narrative not only tells the story of Mira's life but also succeeds in

involving the reader in Mira's divine communion with her Lord.

The sketches in the book by Sri Biswaranjan Chakravarty are suggestive and attractive. The author has dedicated the book to those who imagine that there is no love for God in their hearts. The reading of this small book will lead to a pleasant inner discovery.

NARENDRANATH B. PATIL, M.A. LL.B. PH. D.
Director of Languages, Bombay

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF RAMAKRISHNA MATH

&

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION FOR APRIL 1983—MARCH 1984

Issued by the General Secretary

History

Shortly after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of harmony of all religions, in August, 1886, a monastic Order bearing his name was organized in pursuance of his own instructions with a monastery (Math) at Baranagore, a northern suburb of Calcutta, by his Sannyasin disciples headed by Swami Vivekananda. It gradually set up a twofold ideal before it: To create a band of Sannyasin teachers of Vedanta as propounded by Sri Ramakrishna and practically illustrated by his own life; and in conjunction with the lay disciples to carry on missionary and philanthropic work, looking upon all, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, as veritable manifestations of the Divine. For some time the latter work was carried on through an association called the Ramakrishna Mission Association, started by Swami Vivekananda in May, 1897, shortly after his return from the West. In 1899 he transferred the Math, which had changed places by now, to its present site at Belur, across the Ganga, about six kilometres north of Calcutta, where it set itself more vigorously to the task of training a band of monks inspired with the twin ideals of Self-realization and service to the world. Soon after this, the Math authorities took upon themselves the work of the Mission Association.

Though the Ramakrishna Math was registered as a Trust in 1901, for the efficiency of the work of the Mission Association and for giving it a legal status, a society named the Rama-

krishna Mission was registered in 1909 under Act XXI of 1860 (see Appendices A and B). Its management vested in a Governing Body. Both the Math and the Mission gradually extended their spheres of activity as a result of which a number of branches in different parts of the country and abroad came into existence.

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Though Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities, they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the monks of Ramakrishna Math, and both have their Headquarters at Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to welfare service of various kinds. This distinction should be borne in mind, though 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is affiliated either to Ramakrishna Math or to Ramakrishna Mission.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social welfare activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the

Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission accounts are annually audited by qualified auditors.

Summary of Activities

The following notable developments took place during the year under report:—

A new Building for housing Monastery and Office at Chengalpattu, and a new Building of the Higher Secondary School at Coimbatore were inaugurated. The newly constructed first floor and a part of the ground floor of the Ramakrishna Mission School at Dhaka, the new extension and upper storey of the Science Building at Manasadwip, and the newly constructed third floor of the southern block, consisting of shrine room and the connected extension, at the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, were declared open.

Foundation was laid for a new Library Building at Ranchi (Morabadi). The Blind Boys' Academy of Narendrapur Ashrama received the National Award by the Government of India for its outstanding contribution for the welfare of disabled persons in India for the year 1983, along with a citation and a sum of Rupees One Lakh.

During the same period, the following important developments took place in the Ramakrishna Math:

A marble statue of Sri Ramakrishna was installed in the shrine at Ootacamund. The Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, started Integrated Rural Development work, including Mobile Medical Service, under the name 'Gramasri', in four select villages of Andhra Pradesh.

The gardens and the attached land at Barisha (24 Parganas) near Calcutta, belonging to the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, along with the existing activities there, was constituted into a Branch Centre under the name 'Ramakrishna Math, Barisha'.

The Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna's visit to Yogodyan (1883-1983) was celebrated at Kankurgachhi. Foundations were laid for Monks' Quarters at Rajahmundry and for 'Home for the Aged' at Barisha. The newly built third floor of the annexe to the hospital at Trivandrum was declared open. Three Swamis were appointed Trustees of the Belur Math and Members of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission and one of them was subsequently elected an Assistant Secretary of the Math and the Mission.

Centres

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1984, 119 branch centres in all, of which 52 were Mission centres, 22 combined Math and Mission centres, and 45 Math centres. These were distributed as follows: two Mission centres, five combined Math and Mission centres and three Math centres in Bangladesh; one Mission centre each in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; one Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 12 Math centres in the United States of America, and the remaining 45 Mission centres, 17 combined Math and Mission centres and 27 Math centres (89 in all) in India. The Indian centres were distributed as follows: 29 in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 11 in Tamil Nadu, seven in Bihar, six in Kerala, four in Karnataka, three each in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, two each in Maharashtra and Meghalaya, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to some of the branch centres there were over twenty sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

Types of Work

Medical Service: The Math and the Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Prominent of these are the indoor hospitals in Calcutta, Kankhal, Lucknow, Itanagar, Ranchi, Trivandrum, Varanasi and Vrindaban. In 1983-84 there were altogether 13 Indoor Hospitals with 1,783 beds which accommodated 54,628 patients, 79 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 44,52,396 cases including the old ones and 14 Mobile Dispensaries which treated 4,38,447 cases, mostly in rural and tribal areas. Besides, some centres had emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shvamala Tal Ashrama treated 65 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated T.B. cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and child-welfare work. At Trivandrum there was also a department of Psychiatry. Research on different branches of Medical Science as also Post-graduate training in degree and diploma courses were conducted at Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta.

Educational Work: The twin organizations

ran, during the year, 5 Degree Colleges, of general education at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Coimbatore, Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (24 Parganas) with 4,692 students on their rolls. The last two were wholly residential, and the colleges at Madras and Coimbatore had attached hostels for residing students. In addition, there were 3 B.Ed. Colleges at Belur, Coimbatore and Mysore with 356 students; one Basic Training School at Coimbatore with 34 students; one Post-graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 104 students; 4 Junior Basic Training Institutes at Rahara, Sarisha and Sargachhi with 319 students; a College for Physical Education, and a School of Agriculture with 112 and 100 students respectively at Coimbatore; 4 Polytechnics at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 1,585 students; 10 Junior Technical and Industrial Schools with 668 students; 10 Vocational Training Centres with 305 students; 93 Students' Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages with 11,712 boys and 1,691 girls; 42 Higher Secondary, Secondary and High Schools with 22,992 boys and 10,940 girls; 25 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 4,912 boys and 3,118 girls; 43 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 6,641 boys and 3,488 girls; and 487 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 25,000 boys and 4,170 girls; 52 Adult Education and Community Centres with 1,071 students; an Institute of Medical Sciences with 28 students, was conducted by the Seva Pratishthan of Calcutta. Training of Nurses and Midwives was undertaken by Seva Pratishthan of Calcutta, Sevashrama of Vrindaban and also Math Hospital at Trivandrum, the total number of trainees being 300. Two Schools of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages—one with 2,605 students by Institute of Culture, Calcutta and another with 470 students by Hyderabad—were conducted. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy, an Institute of Commerce and a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre with 169, 163 and 2,057 students respectively. The centre at Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a training centre in farming (Divyayan) with 2,392 (302 in-campus) students. The centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 52 students. Thus there were altogether 87,168 boys and 25,078 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius.

Recreational Activities: Some of the Math and the Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities for youngsters at stated periods outside their school & college hours. *The Vivekananda Balaka Sangha* of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. The Ashrama has started a Yuvaka Sangha for youths. At the Mysore Ashrama also a number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facilities provided for them, and the youth section of the *Janashiksha Mandir*, Belur, is engaged in similar activities. The Hyderabad and Salem Centres also conduct similar programmes for boys.

Work for Women: The organizations have ever been conscious of their duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha and the three Training Schools for nurses at Trivandrum, Vrindaban and Calcutta. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes: The twin organizations have all along tried their best to serve the unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. These services are done in three ways: (a) By bringing them from rural areas to our urban centres; (b) By sending our dedicated workers to rural areas; (c) Through centres located in rural areas. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Chandipur, Sargachhi, Along, Narottam Nagar, Chengalpattu, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural sub-centres—both permanent and semi-permanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Rahara, Sarisha, Trichur, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these, special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a farming centre at Ranchi, specially meant for Adivasis and scheduled castes. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Nagas, Kukis and Mizos etc. by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational, medical, and cultural activities in Arunachal Pradesh are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organizations

ran in the rural and backward areas 19 Secondary or High Schools, 47 Senior Basic, Junior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 54 Primary Schools, 32 Night Schools, 10 Vocational Training Centres, a Rural Librarianship Training Centre, a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre, 3 Sanskrit Schools, a School of Agriculture, 52 Adult Education and Community Centres, 378 Non-formal Education Centres, and an Institute (Divyayana) for training village youths in farming—with a total of 50,198 students. The organizations also conducted 3 Indoor Hospitals treating 1,200 cases, 38 Outdoor Dispensaries treating 9,28,242 patients and 5 Mobile Dispensaries serving 1,50,046 patients, besides running 154 Milk-distribution centres and a number of libraries with 4 mobile units all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such varied activities, preaching and educative tours, screening movie-films and slides and such other efforts were also undertaken. The statistics given in this paragraph form part of the figures furnished under 'Medical Service' and 'Educational Work'.

Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development): The Math and the Mission Headquarters directly conducted Pallimangal activities, as Pilot Project, in 17 villages in and around Kamarpukur, Jayrambati and Bali-Dewanganj (West Bengal). Its day-to-day field works are being conducted with the help of 16 trained young men as Pallimangal cadre under the supervision of monks.

The following programmes were implemented by the Headquarters during the year 1983-84 with a total expenditure of Rs. 7,43,513/-.

1. Agriculture: (i) The Soil Testing Laboratory at Kamarpukur was inaugurated and during the year soil analysis was done for 723 plots and accordingly the farmers were advised about the correct type and measure of fertilizers to be used; (ii) Agricultural inputs worth Rs. 46,000/- were given on credit to 160 farmers; (iii) Facilities for marketing Jute and Sannhemp (a kind of fibre) were provided to 48 farmers. Efforts are being made to improve the quality of Sannhemp by modern methods and to mechanize the process of retting so that farmers can grow on a large scale Sannhemp which has a ready market for sale.

2. Pisciculture: Composite fish-culture was done by 20 persons under expert guidance and demonstration in one pond at Kamarpukur.

3. Artificial Insemination Centre: It served 140 cases.

4. Credit for Small Business: Materials worth Rs. 2,650/- were given as loan to 21 persons for weaving and rice business.

5. Cottage Industry: 100 trained persons are running independently a number of Cottage Industries such as tailoring, weaving and incense sticks manufacturing units.

6. Educational: One Adult Education Centre was conducted at Bali-Dewanganj and 30 Non-formal Schools run by Kamarpukur Math Centre were supervised by Pallimangal Cadres.

7. Mobile Medical Service: (i) Cases treated 51,268 in and around Kamarpukur, Jayrambati, Koalpara and Bali-Dewanganj; (ii) Free Eye Operation Camp was conducted at Jayrambati and 59 cataract cases were operated and given spectacles.

8. Organizational: Adopting the ideas and ideals of Swami Vivekananda for the uplift of masses on the lines of Pallimangal, 50 youngsters of Bali-Dewanganj have constituted the 'Vivekananda Palli Samstha' to conduct Integrated Rural Development Programmes.

The following programmes were implemented by the branch centres: (i) 5 Mobile Dispensaries (Mission) were run and 2,15,254 cases (Bombay 69,114; Kankhal (2 Units) 53,519; Raipur 46,790; and Vrindaban 45,831) were treated; (ii) Vocational training, distribution of nutritious food and clothings programmes were conducted and financial assistance was given to needy persons, by the Bombay Centre; (iii) 3 Mobile Dispensaries were run by Math centres at Madras (through Nattarampalli Centre), Hyderabad and Shyamala Tal: cases treated 21,879 in more than 150 villages.

Mass Contact: From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organizations' activities are not confined to or concentrated in urban areas alone; they are spread over other fields as well. The message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is steadily spreading in all parts of India, which is evident from the participation of innumerable people in the annual celebrations. The Ashramas and temples also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Over and above these, there are a number of medical institutions where lakhs of people get free medicines and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also a considerable number of poor students get free education, board and/or lodging. The organizations are also running a good number of free libraries in the rural areas. The publication centres,

sometimes, sell booklets at nominal prices to suit the pocket of the masses.

Spiritual and Cultural Work: Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The centres established real points of contact among people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. More than 123 Libraries containing large number of books and journals were conducted by them. Attached to the libraries Reading Rooms were maintained in many places. A college, a Chatuspathi and a Pathashala, for Sanskrit studies were run. At least ten centres published books on religious subjects and 12 journals in different languages. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has published *The Cultural Heritage of India* (5 Volumes so far) and which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. The Math centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihshreyasananda in Africa (Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, 35 Rhodes Avenue, Box BE 128, Belvedere, Harare, Zimbabwe).

Relief and Rehabilitation Work: As usual the Mission undertook relief and rehabilitation work either directly through the Headquarters or in conjunction with some branch centres. Some works were also conducted by the branch centres themselves.

1. The following Relief Works were conducted in India:

Flood Relief: (i) in 10 Anchals, viz. Barrage complex, Gamiria, Lolonga, Photamati, Maharani, Khilpara etc. of the South Tripura district by the Headquarters; (ii) in 58 villages at Sangameswar, Ratnagiri, Vasai & Kagal Talukas in Konkan area of Maharashtra through Bombay Centre; (iii) at Srirangapatnam, Pithapuram, Gollapalem, Chodavaram & Elamanchalli Talukas covering more than 19 villages in the East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh through Visakhapatnam Centre;

(iv) at Vanthali, Junagadh, Keshod, Manavedar, Porbandar, Visavadar, Mendarda, Bhesan, Jetpur and Upleta Talukas of the Rajkot and Junagadh districts of Gujarat through Rajkot Math Centre, covering 8,298 families of 90 villages.

Drought Relief: (i) at Saradapalli, Sankarara, Birrah, Jemua, Chardihi, Suarara and Matiapara in the Bankura district of West Bengal through Ramharipur Centre; (ii) at Jahajpur, Ladabera, Palanja and Bongabari of the Purulia District through Purulia Centre; (iii) at Nattarampalli in the North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu through Nattarampalli Math Centre.

Disturbances Relief: at Dangi Camp in Alipurduar of West Bengal by the Headquarters and at Khoirabari Camp in Assam by the Headquarters with the help of Gauhati Centre.

Refugee Relief: at Mandapam Camp near Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, for Sri Lanka Refugees and Repatriates through Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, T. Nagar, Madras.

Tornado Relief: in 20 villages of Ichapur II, Dooma, and Simulpur Anchals in Gaighata Block of the 24 Parganas district in West Bengal by the Headquarters.

Winter Relief: (i) at Mahula, Haridasmati, Nowdapanur, Manindranagar, Raghunathganj of the Murshidabad district in West Bengal through Sargachhi Centre; (ii) at Ganakbandi, Kusta Colony, Raulia, Tharbani, Amlagora etc. of the Midnapore district through Garbeta Centre; (iii) at Bali, Nischinta Nir, Abhaybari, Dighra, Dulepara, Mirjapur etc. of the Hooghly district by the Headquarters.

Medical Relief: at Gangasagar Mela and Chemaguri through Seva Pratishthan, Manasadwip and Sarisha Centres.

The expenditure of the Primary Relief work alone in cash and kind was Rs. 41,94,031.67 benefitting 1,96,452 recipients of 20,842 families belonging to 352 villages. The materials distributed were as follows:

30,000 Food Packets, Rice 3,409 kg., Grain 93,001 kg., Tea 835 kg., Rava 300 kg., Milk Powder 300 kg., Potato 3,020 kg., Sugar 4,240 kg., Dhoti 6,037 pcs., Sari 15,727 pcs., Blouse 7,244 pcs., Petti-coat 404 pcs., Garments 13,682 pcs., Longcloth 38,236 pcs., Woollen Blanket 3,108 pcs., Old Garments 32,685 pcs., Ready-made Clothes 5,600 pcs., Genji 2,763 pcs., Carpet 8,600 pcs., Cotton Blanket 22 pcs., Cotton Chaddar 9,538 pcs., Woollen Chaddar 300 pcs., Utensils 68,012 pcs., Kupa-lamp 300 pcs., Lantern 211 pcs., Candle 6,000 pckts., Match Box 21,041 pcs., Soap 705 pcs., Medicine 3

Boxes, Urea fertilizer 1,150 kg., Spade 200 pcs., Axes 44 pcs., Knife 20 pcs., One Diesel Engine with pump, Sewing machine 6 nos, Washerman's vessels (Bona & Gona) 402 sets, 380 healthy Cows, Sets of Implements to 6 tailors, 6 farmers, 7 cobblers, 5 blacksmiths, 4 carpenters & 5 barbers and two bullock carts to 2 families. Besides these, 11,468 patients were treated at Mandapam Refugee Relief Camp, Rameswaram and at Sagar Island in Gangasagar Mela. Cooked food was supplied to 85,791 Sri Lanka refugees, at Mandapam Camp, Rameswaram.

2. The following Rehabilitation Works were conducted:

(a) By the Headquarters (i) Reconstruction of three blocks of New Jagatpur affected by storm in Hooghly district of West Bengal; (ii) 485 houses under 'Build Your Own House' scheme at Gaighata Block of 24 Parganas district in West Bengal were constructed and handed over to the beneficiaries. Rebuilding of two wings of Thakurnagar Girls' High School through the Managing Committee of the School was in progress. (b) By the branch centres: (i) Inauguration of Ramalaya and Community Hall at Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh through Rajahmundry Centre; (ii) 220 Pucca houses, 4 Primary School buildings and two High School buildings are in various stages of construction in Junagadh district through Rajkot Math Centre; (iii) 79 houses with Mangalore-tiles roofing at Kagal Taluk of Kolhapur district in Maharashtra were in the final stages of construction through Bombay Centre.

The total expenditure of above mentioned Rehabilitation Projects during the year was Rs. 16,08,616.07.

Annual Celebrations: Most of the Math and the Mission centres appropriately observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi (the Holy Mother) and Swami Vivekananda are: Special worship, *Homa* (offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, *Bhajan* and *Sankirtan* (often in chorus), distribution of *Prasad* (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers, and lectures by eminent speakers,

including the Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his direct associates is steadily spreading, and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and the Mission. In co-operation with the local public, a few centres celebrate some of the popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE SECOND CONVENTION OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION 1980

Under the auspices and direction of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Committee, constituted at the close of the grand Second Convention 1980 to fulfil the need for spreading the message of Swami Vivekananda, particularly among the younger generation, and for spreading the life-giving message of Sri Ramakrishna, the following branch centres conducted Youth Conventions where the participants exhibited tremendous enthusiasm and keen interest in the proceedings: Allahabad, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Contai, Deoghar, Khetri, Madras (Vivekananda College), Mangalore, Patna, Ponampet, Puri (Mission), Purulia, Rajahmundry, Ramharipur, Salem, Tamluk and Tiruvalla.

The All-India Youth Convention (Boys and Girls) of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission which was scheduled to be held at the Belur Math in December 1984 is now proposed to be held towards the end of December 1985.

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT

'The Committee for the Comprehensive Study of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement' held two meetings during the year and formed a broad-based Advisory Committee and a Working Committee towards furtherance of its activities. Efforts are being continued to organize regional and national seminars/conferences with commendable success.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Focus on the Youth

This month of December has acquired a special significance in view of the fact that it marks the end of the International Youth Year. It has become an important one for those who are associated with the Ramakrishna Movement because of the All India Youth Convention to be held in the last week of December at Belur Math, Howrah, under the auspices of Ramakrishna Mission. Both the IYY and the Convention have one aim: to focus attention on the youth.

Youth has been defined by the UN as the period between 15 and 25 years of age. All those who belong to this age group show certain common characteristics and have some common problems. But behind this congruence there lies a complex diversity, which has considerable significance in developing countries like India. Therefore one has to be careful about making sweeping generalizations regarding 'the youth' and 'youth problems'. A more realistic approach would be to classify youths into some broad socio-economic groups and deal with the problems of each group separately. Four major groups may be identified in the Indian context.

1. *The successful group.* It consists of youngsters who are intellectually brilliant, work hard, go for higher studies, get good jobs and lead fairly successful lives. You can find them in our engineering and medical institutions, research laboratories, administrative service, and industrial and commercial establishments. They are the country's promise of the future and, if they have problems, they know where to seek the solutions.

2. *Discontented group.* It consists of youngsters belonging mostly to middle-class families, who are mediocre in studies, find it difficult to get good jobs and are often victims of parental neglect or social injustice. They acquire education with great difficulty but find little meaning in it. Many of them finally settle down to some jobs with low pay to swell the ranks of malcontents in society. Quite a number, however, try to compensate for their feelings of inferiority by joining pressure-groups and gangs that indulge in violence, agitations and anti-social activities.

3. *The exploited group.* Thousands of children in India are abruptly catapulted into adulthood and therefore do not seem to go through the phase of youth. Even from a tender age they have been burdened with adult duties and responsibilities. You can see these premature 'adults' working in the homes of affluent people as domestic servants, in tea plantations, small industrial units, hotels and the estates of landlords. They are either illiterates or dropouts, and are invariably underpaid and overworked.

4. *The neglected group.* To this class belong all those millions of rural youths who are untouched by the benefits of modern education and industry and also by the evils of modern culture. They usually follow their family or caste profession and live fairly contented lives as village artisans and farmers.

Governmental agencies and voluntary organizations should first of all identify the main needs of each of these groups and should evolve appropriate strategies for their fulfilment. One unavoidable guiding principle in these programmes should be the active involvement of youths themselves in their own welfare activities. As motivating themes for this task, *economic security*, *self-discipline* and *service* may be more pragmatic and more compatible with the Indian situation than participation, development and peace chosen by the U.N.
